



POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

FOR VOLUNTEERS

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WELCOME TO CASA FOR LANCASTER COUNTY!

Dear Volunteer,

CASA for Lancaster County is pleased to welcome you as a volunteer with our program. Since 1999, **CASA for Lancaster County** has advocated for children in our court and child welfare systems. Therefore, as a volunteer, you are a critical component in the advocacy efforts of this program.

This manual will provide you with the policies and procedures of this CASA program. This manual is not a contract and does not guarantee any fixed terms and conditions of a volunteer's participation in this CASA program. It is information that we would like you to become familiar with and follow. Your commitment to these policies and procedures will make **CASA for Lancaster County** a stronger and more effective program. It will also help us maintain a level of professionalism, which is an integral part of CASA.

After the one-year commitment we ask of each volunteer, your service as a volunteer will last only as long as you agree. However, **CASA for Lancaster County** is looking forward to having a long and beneficial relationship with you and with all our other volunteers.

We encourage any suggestions you may have for improving our services or our policies and procedures manual. We have an "open door" policy. Therefore, if you have any problems or questions concerning the policies and procedures outlined in this manual, we want you to feel comfortable enough to take the matter up directly with me.

Sincerely,

Dawn Rockey
Executive Director

To give a child a CASA is to give them a voice. To give them a voice is to give them hope, and to give them hope is to give them the world.
Pamela B., former CASA child

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General Program Policies and Procedures

Purpose of Policies and Procedures

The **purpose** of these policies and procedures is to provide overall guidance and direction to persons serving as volunteers for **CASA for Lancaster County**. They do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. **CASA for Lancaster County** reserves the right to change any of these policies and procedures at any time and expect adherence to the changed policy. Areas specifically not addressed by these policies and procedures shall be determined by the Executive Director and/or the Board¹. All CASA Volunteers will receive a copy of the current Policies and Procedures. Volunteers will be required to sign an acknowledgement indicating that they have read, understood, and will comply with all the policies and procedures. Volunteers will be notified of any changes made to this policy and procedure manual.

Discrimination

CASA for Lancaster County promotes equal employment/volunteer opportunities to all applicants/employees/volunteers by prohibiting discriminatory policies concerning any individual or group based on race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental disability, color, gender, age, marital status, political affiliation, military status, or veteran status.

Staff and volunteers are admonished that racial slurs, ethnic jokes or other disparaging remarks or conduct based on race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental disability, color, gender, age, marital status, political affiliation, military status, or veteran status are never appropriate in the work place or while in your role as a CASA volunteer advocate.

CASA for Lancaster County will take prompt and immediate action to investigate instances of reported misconduct. Any employee or volunteer found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Sexual Harassment

CASA for Lancaster County affirms that all women and men are to be treated fairly and equally, with dignity and respect. We strive to achieve a working environment that is professional and supportive to all individuals.

¹ The term "Board" is meant to include a Board of Directors, an Advisory Board, or any other oversight board or committee.

Sexual harassment is defined to be any unsolicited behavior, which asserts a person's sex as a factor of his/her function as an employee, or volunteer. It includes any unwanted sexual behavior, comments, suggestions, physical contact; propositions backed by implied or actual threats of losing or lowering work, and/or forced sexual relations. Sexual harassment does not include personal compliments welcomed by the recipient, or social interaction or relationships freely entered into by the individuals involved.

CASA for Lancaster County will take prompt and immediate action to investigate instances of reported misconduct. Any employee or volunteer found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Alcohol/Drug Use

CASA for Lancaster County is committed to providing an environment that is safe. Staff and volunteers are role models for persons using this program's services. **CASA for Lancaster County** endorses the philosophy that the workplace should be free from the detrimental effects of alcohol and/or illegal drugs. There will be no differentiation between someone who illegally uses drugs and someone that sells or distributes drugs.

Being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs is prohibited and is cause for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The following information shall be included in the volunteer application: educational background; employment history; personal experience with child abuse or neglect; full name, AKA's, and maiden name; social security number; date of birth; and residence for the previous seven (7) years.

Also included with the volunteer application will be the names and addresses for three references and release of information forms to be sent to the Nebraska Child Abuse/Neglect Central Registry, One Source, The Background Check Company, and the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles. Background check includes local, state and federal criminal record check, social security number verification, child/adult abuse registry and sex offender registry for current and all past addresses (7 years) if outside Lincoln (Lancaster County).

Once CASA for Lancaster County program staff (staff includes all paid CASA for Lancaster County staff) receives and reviews all aforesaid information, a staff member may determine that an applicant does or does not qualify to become a volunteer. If the staff member determines a volunteer does not qualify, the staff member will contact him or her that he or she does not qualify to be a volunteer. Such disqualification (prior to training) can be appealed to the Executive Director.

CASA program staff may determine at any time during the screening and training process, including prior to assigning the volunteer a case that the volunteer does not qualify to be a volunteer. The volunteer will be notified by the Executive Director if such a determination is made. Disqualification by the Executive Director prior to a case being assigned may not be appealed to the Board, unless it can be shown that the Executive Director disqualified a volunteer in violation of **CASA for Lancaster County** policy on discrimination or sexual harassment.

Volunteer applicants who are licensed foster parents will not be allowed to complete training or be assigned to a case if they have children placed in their home unless it is an emergency, temporary placement. It is a conflict of interest to be a foster parent with on-going placements and a CASA volunteer. Consideration may be made if an individual is licensed through an agency rather than with the Department of Health and Human Services. However, the overriding policy is that current, active foster parents are disqualified from becoming a CASA volunteer. If a licensed foster parent takes placement of a foster child(ren) and it is not a temporary/emergency placement, while they are also an assigned CASA volunteer, they will be removed from their CASA case.

VOLUNTEER FILES

A file of all the volunteers and applicants shall remain confidential and will be maintained in a locked file cabinet and/or in a secured database on a computer in the program office. However, such files may be shared with other programs or the Nebraska CASA Association, if the circumstance arises. All volunteer files shall contain the following: application; background checks; references; volunteer oath; statement of commitment; the letter of acknowledgement from the policy and procedure manual; evaluations; and documentation of any disciplinary action. All volunteers are responsible to report any changes of address, telephone, or other pertinent information to the Executive Director or to CASA program staff.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

CASA FOR LANCASTER COUNTY provides volunteers with an initial 30 hours of training. Topics include: the roles and responsibilities of a volunteer and other professionals; permanency planning; confidentiality; cultural competency; child abuse and neglect; juvenile court process; dynamics of families including mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence and poverty; relevant state laws and regulations; relevant federal laws and regulations; child development; community agencies and available resources; effective advocacy and observation of court. At this time, the volunteer will also be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement and a letter of commitment. All volunteers must complete the training before they will be assigned a case.

Upon successful completion of training, the volunteer will be sworn-in as a Court Appointed Special Advocate by a judge of the Juvenile Court of Lancaster County.

Continued training is essential to ensuring a volunteer's success. **CASA for Lancaster County** is required to offer twelve (12) hours in-service training throughout the year and all volunteers are expected to participate. However, if a volunteer is unable to attend specific in-service training but is able to participate in relevant

programming on his or her own, **CASA for Lancaster County** will count those hours towards the 12 hour requirement. Volunteers are responsible for having such programming authorized by the Executive Director prior to attending. **CASA for Lancaster County** will also notify volunteers of outside training opportunities available in the community and surrounding area. Volunteer may also be asked to provide documentation that the volunteer attended the programming.

VOLUNTEER CASE ASSIGNMENT

CASA program staff will try to match a volunteer with a case based on the preferences of the volunteer. A volunteer has the right to refuse a case assignment for any reason.

Once a volunteer accepts a case, he or she must sign a certificate of acceptance to be maintained in the case file. The volunteer will then receive any documentation necessary to manage his or her case, including, but not limited to, the court order appointing him or her as the CASA. CASA program staff is responsible for introducing the volunteer to all the parties of the case and/or providing the volunteer with contact information for all the parties of the case, verifying the volunteer's appointment.

The volunteer shall maintain a case file at his or her residence. Such file must be placed in a secure place to ensure that all information remains confidential. **CASA for Lancaster County** will also maintain an office file of the case in a locked file cabinet.

At the conclusion of the volunteer's involvement with the case, including resignation by or termination of the volunteer, the volunteer shall return the entire case file to CASA for Lancaster County! This includes, but is not limited to, all original documentation of the volunteer's appointment to the case, court documents, documentation of phone calls or other interviews, any correspondence, medical records or other assessments, and any and all personal notes on the case.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

- To serve as an arm of the Juvenile Court as a researcher, monitor and child advocate.
- Meet in-person with the child/ren at least once per month.
- Visit institutions, foster homes or group homes where child is placed or may be placed and attend team meetings.
- Interview the child/ren, parents, social workers, teachers and other relevant persons to gather information about the child/ren's situation.
- Collaborate and coordinate with legal, child welfare and other partners to ensure service provision that is in the child/ren's best interest.
- Identify and advocate for the best interests of the child/ren.
- Advocate for the child/ren's best interests in the community by interfacing with mental health, educational and other relevant systems, subject to confidentiality limitations.
- Obtain a clear understanding of the needs and situation of the child/ren by conducting an ongoing review of all relevant documents and records.

- Monitor implementation of services plans and court orders and assess whether court-ordered services are implemented in a timely manner and whether review hearings should be scheduled with the court.
- Make recommendations for services for the child/ren and the child/ren's family. Recommendations should be discussed with Volunteer Coordinator prior to submitting recommendations to the Court.
- If applicable, refer assigned CASA child (parent, foster parent, GAL, or DHHS case worker) to Crime Victim's Reparation Claim Form (on CASA website).
- Seek information about whether a permanency plan has been created for the child/ren and to make recommendations concerning permanency.
- Submit thorough, independent, written reports to the Court at every hearing which includes information and recommendations about the child/ren's needs and best interests. Court reports should be completed for review and provided to Volunteer Coordinator no less than 5 working days prior to the court hearing, unless the volunteer makes other arrangements. Volunteer Coordinator shall review all court reports and will be responsible for distributing reports to all the parties to the case.
- Inform the Court promptly of important developments in the case through appropriate means as determined by court rules and statute.
- Appear in court to advocate for the child/ren's best interests and provide testimony when necessary.
- Maintain complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child/ren and the child/ren's life circumstances.
- Maintain contact with Volunteer Coordinator, participate in all scheduled case reviews and submit all documentation.
- Remain involved in the case until the Court's jurisdiction is terminated.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Ultimate responsibility for all CASA cases rests with the Executive Director. However, the volunteer also represents **CASA for Lancaster County**, and what you say and do in the courtroom and in the community reflects on the program. Always try to conduct yourself in a manner that reflects favorably on **CASA for Lancaster County**.

Dress – volunteers should dress appropriately for court and meetings with other community agencies. If you have any questions about what to wear, please call the CASA office.

Gift Giving – volunteers should not give money, extravagant gifts, or purchase clothing for the children that they are advocating for. In addition, volunteers are prohibited from giving money or gifts to the child's family or caregiver. Applications can be made to the CASA Kids Activity Fund to pay for activities or items needed by the child.

Providing Direct Service – volunteers are restricted from providing direct services such as, but not limited to: transporting parties, intervening in domestic disputes, providing counseling, giving legal advice, offering to provide funds for food or

other necessities, or making placement arrangements. Volunteers are prohibited from taking a child to the volunteer's home. Volunteers shall not transport a CASA child to any location that is not pre-approved by the child's legal guardian, custodial agency and CASA Volunteer Coordinator or Executive Director. **Volunteers are facilitators;** volunteers advocate for the direct service agencies to provide these services to the families the volunteers advocate for. Volunteers can request permission to transport a CASA child but must adhere to the Transportation Policy for Staff and Volunteers. It requires volunteers to carry state minimum insurance. The full policy is available from the CASA for Lancaster County Office and is attached at the end of this document.

Volunteers shall not provide direct service delivery to any party involved in their cases that could (a) lead to a conflict of interest or liability problems, or (b) cause a child or family to become dependent on the volunteer for services that should be provided by other agencies or organizations.

Public Speaking/Media – volunteers are encouraged to speak about the program in general throughout the community. However, inquiries concerning **CASA for Lancaster County**, its policies, practices, or clients must be referred to the Executive Director. Volunteers are prohibited from making any statements to the media involving the program or on behalf of the program.

Photos of CASA Children- policies allow photos only when requested or required by the court to be included with or in the court report or written or verbal 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. Once a picture has been used or attached to a report it should be deleted from your device.

Involvement with the Legal/Welfare System – volunteers must immediately notify the program if the volunteer is charged with or convicted of a criminal offense or becomes involved in any other court proceeding which might cause a conflict of interest or adversely affect the volunteer's ability to effectively advocate for a child. This includes notifying the program if the volunteer or any member of the volunteer's immediate family becomes involved in a case with allegations of child abuse or neglect.

Decline Appointment, Withdraw or Request Assistance - volunteers that recognize that they may not have the time or ability to effectively advocate for a child should decline to be appointed withdraw or request assistance.

Conflict of Interest – volunteers' effectiveness and standing in court depend on them maintaining professional relationships with children and families. Volunteers should not become personally involved with the children and their families. This includes not being related to or developing intimate, social or other nonprofessional relationships with any person connected to the case or being employed in a position that might result in a conflict of interest. Volunteers must notify staff of any conflicts or potential conflicts at the time they occur. Unreported conflicts could result in a volunteer's dismissal.

Communication with Parties – volunteers are prohibited from giving counseling; legal advice; misrepresenting the role or position of a volunteer; or engaging in any ex parte² conversation with a judge.

Confidentiality – volunteers become “friends of the court” upon appointment to a case. **Any information pertaining to the children or families, including the foster families, which the volunteers receive in the course of their duties, is strictly confidential.** Discussion of the case may only take place with those directly involved with the case. No discussions of any children or family situations of any kind are to be held in hallways, elevators, or other public places. Should there be a question as to whom volunteers may speak to about the case, please contact your Volunteer Coordinator or the Executive Director. Volunteers who break confidentiality will be subject to dismissal by the Executive Director.

All volunteers must sign the volunteer statement of commitment which specifically states; “I will discuss matters only with those persons who are directly involved with the case”. Not adhering to these guidelines could result in a volunteer’s dismissal.

Duty to Disclose: Exceptions to Confidentiality – volunteers are not protected by privilege, like a doctor-patient or lawyer-client relationship. It is the volunteers’ responsibility to transmit the information they collect to the parties and the court. At the beginning of the case, volunteers should carefully inform all the parties regarding what records will be maintained about them and what information will be shared, with whom, and under what circumstances.

Volunteers have a duty to immediately disclose instances where the volunteers suspect (1) Child abuse and/or neglect; (2) Someone showing serious and imminent harm of her/himself or others. Such disclosure should be to the Department of Health and Human Services (Abuse Hotline 800-652-1999) or the police. Volunteers that have a question about disclosure should immediately call their Volunteer Coordinator or the Executive Director.

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

Every effort should be made to solve problems cooperatively and informally before presenting them as a formal grievance. Should informal efforts fail, the following policy and procedure is set forth in order to provide an outlet for complaints and a systematic means to resolve grievances. All complaints will receive thoughtful consideration and will be discussed. Complaints and grievances may arise from external (outside the immediate program) or internal (within the program) sources.

External – Because volunteers are involved with work that impacts the future lives of children and families, this emotionally charged work evokes a wide range of feeling from all the parties involved. It is therefore common and expected that there may be criticism from the parties. Should a complaint arise from someone outside

² The Nebraska Supreme Court has stated “an ex parte communication occurs when a judge communicates with any person concerning a pending or impending proceeding without notice to an adverse party.” *State v. Lotter*, 255 Neb. 456 (1998)

CASA for Lancaster County, the Executive Director will discuss the complaint with the volunteer. The Director is responsible for deciding if the complaint has any validity and may request a written statement from the party initiating the complaint. In addition, the Executive Director, with advice from the board, may determine what action, if any, should be taken.

Internal – When a volunteer wishes to make a complaint with a policy, practice, condition or Executive Director’s decision, it is encouraged that the volunteer should first try to discuss the matter informally with the Executive Director. If this is not an option or the problem is not resolved to the volunteer’s satisfaction, he or she should contact the board president to discuss the issue, a board roster is listed on our website. If the issue is still not resolved, the volunteer should place the complaint in writing to be submitted to the all the members of the board for discussion. The board must provide the volunteer with a written response outlining its position.

If the volunteer still feels that the problem is not resolved to the volunteer’s satisfaction, he or she should contact the Executive Director of the Nebraska CASA Association, 3701 Sumner Street, Lincoln, NE 68506 402-477-2788, www.nebraskacasa.org.

EVALUATIONS

Volunteers will be evaluated. Periodic evaluations help **CASA for Lancaster County** sustain long and mutually productive relationships with our volunteers. If **CASA for Lancaster County** determines that its best interests are not being served, it may work with the volunteer to develop a plan to improve his or her efforts or may choose to terminate the relationship.

Evaluations may also come as the result of verbal or written warnings.

Volunteers are encouraged to use the evaluation sessions to discuss areas of concern and to make suggestions about improving the volunteer program.

All evaluations will be maintained in the volunteer’s file.

DISCIPLINE

The purpose of discipline is to correct volunteer misconduct or to improve performance. Depending on the circumstances, misconduct will result in disciplinary action, which may include a verbal warning, written warning, or dismissal. Verbal and written warnings will be administered by the Executive Director and a record of such will be placed in the volunteer’s file.

DISMISSAL

Dismissal of a volunteer will normally follow **CASA for Lancaster County** evaluation and discipline policies. Dismissal of a volunteer is the responsibility of the

Executive Director, who reserves the right to dismiss “at will,” the final decision, of which, can be appealed to the Board.

Immediate dismissal will take place only in the most serious of circumstances. Grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Taking immediate action without **CASA for Lancaster County** or court approval that endangers the child or is outside the role of the volunteer or the program;
- (b) Knowingly and intentionally violating a program policy, court rule or law;
- (c) Demonstrating an inability to effectively carry out the duties of a volunteer;
- (d) Demonstrating gross misconduct or insubordination;
- (e) Failing to complete required pre-service and in-service training;
- (f) Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing the duties of a volunteer;
- (g) Lying or falsifying records or any other documents;
- (h) Failing to timely report any criminal charges filed against you;
- (i) Existence of child abuse/neglect allegations against you;
- (j) Existence of a conflict of interest which cannot be resolved; or
- (k) Any behavior in conflict with the best interest of the CASA program deemed serious in nature by the board and/or Executive Director.

RESIGNATION OR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Volunteers may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to resign from their volunteer service with **CASA for Lancaster County**. It is requested that the volunteer resign orally or in writing. CASA program staff will then send out a letter of verification to the volunteer, a copy of which will be placed in the volunteer’s file.

Should a volunteer want to become active again without repeating the initial training, then he or she must contact the **CASA for Lancaster County** within one (1) year of resigning. They may have to participate in an interview with CASA program staff. If the volunteer fails to contact the program within one (1) year, then he or she must repeat the initial training and may also have to go through the screening process.

Once a volunteer “closes” a case, he or she may choose not to be immediately appointed to another case. He or she should notify CASA program staff of such either orally or in writing. CASA program staff will then send out a letter of verification to the volunteer, a copy of which will be placed in the volunteer’s file.

A volunteer may continue to be on “leave of absence” status for two (2) years. However, such volunteer must continue to participate in in-service training and attend any other events that must be attended by “active” volunteers. Failure to do so will result in an automatic dismissal.

SAFETY

These safety procedures have been established in order to give volunteers guidelines on avoiding possible harmful situations during visits:

- (a) Dress in a fashion that is casual and not conspicuous. Avoid wearing or exposing expensive jewelry. Do not carry a large sum of money.
- (b) Exercise maximum care and good judgement at all times to prevent accidents and injuries. If any kind of accident or injury does occur, the volunteer should report it to the CASA program staff.
- (c) Before going on a visit, verify the appropriate route with the Volunteer Coordinator or Executive Director or become familiar with the area a few days prior to stopping for a visit.
- (d) If you are concerned about visiting a home or any other place, ask the Volunteer Coordinator, other CASA program staff or another experienced volunteer to go with you on a visit.
- (e) Always let someone know where you are and how long you plan to be gone on the visit.
- (f) Visits with children should take place in a public place or with other adults in the near vicinity to avoid claims of misconduct.
- (g) If you have a cellular phone, take it with you and have it on.
- (h) Upon approaching a building or other area, if you do not feel totally comfortable for whatever reason, DO NOT ENTER the building or the area. A visit can be made at another time and arrangements can be made to have someone accompany you.

CASA for Lancaster County – Diversity Statement

CASA for Lancaster County provides equal volunteer and employment opportunities to all applicants without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, military status, or military veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. In addition, CASA for Lancaster County agrees to provide a volunteer and work environment that is free of unlawful harassment of any kind, including that which is sexual, age-related or ethnic when the volunteer and work environment is within CASA's control.

Approved 3-5-02

Update Approved 7/15/2022

CASA for Lancaster County

Policy on Transporting Children:

CASA Volunteers and Staff are not expected to transport the children that are assigned to our program, but there may be occasions when they choose to do so. This should only occur when the following conditions are met:

- a) The CASA volunteer and staff shall only transport a child(ren) for purposes related to his or her role in the CASA Program.
- b) The CASA volunteer and staff shall have been assigned to work with the child(ren) for a minimum of four (4) months and is confident that the child(ren) will behave in a safe and controllable manner while with the CASA volunteer or staff.
- c) The CASA volunteer and staff must provide CASA for Lancaster County Program with a valid driver's license and proof of financial responsibility on the motor vehicle being used to transport the child(ren). The CASA for Lancaster County program will maintain on file a copy of the volunteer's and staff's license and proof of insurance. It will be the volunteer's or staff person's responsibility to provide insurance information annually, and to ensure that the CASA for Lancaster County Staff has on file up to date copies of such information. Insurance must meet or exceed the minimum required by the State of Nebraska as proof of financial responsibility.
- d) The CASA volunteer and staff must notify (in writing or by email) the CASA for Lancaster County director, the child's(ren's) caregiver(s), the legal guardian and the case manager of his or her intention to transport the child, where the child is being transported to, and how the volunteer or staff person can be contacted. If for any reason, any of the aforesaid do not give permission for the child to be transported by the volunteer or staff, the individual is prohibited from transporting the child.
- e) The CASA volunteer or staff must have the appropriate child car seats, booster seats, seat belts, and any other necessary devices properly installed in his or her car, and shall require the child(ren) to use them for the duration of the ride. Children twelve (12) years of age or under must ride in a back seat. A child over twelve (12) years of age may ride in the front seat and must use the seat belts and/or child restraint appropriate for his or her weight and size and must sit against the back of the vehicle seat. If the vehicle has an airbag, the vehicle seat must be moved as far back from the air bag as is practical.
- f) The volunteer or staff choosing to transport the child must understand he or she is personally liable and accept responsibility for the child, as well as the liability for transporting the child.

CASA Volunteers and Staff should at all times be aware of their role as officers of the court and the importance of being seen to do the right thing. They need to protect themselves from unwarranted allegations of wrong-doing. This means being vigilant and careful and not creating opportunities for such allegations to arise.

I have read and understand the CASA for Lancaster County Transportation Policy and agree to abide by the guidelines stated above. Furthermore, I understand the potential personal risk associated with transporting a child and accept the responsibility.

CASA Volunteer or Staff _____ Date _____

CASA Transportation Release- Legal Guardian/Case Worker

I _____ agree to allow _____ to
(Legal Guardian) (CASA Volunteer or Staff)

transport _____.
(Name of Children)

Signed _____

Date _____

*If CASA Volunteer or Staff is unable to obtain the signed form; an email from the case worker/legal guardian containing the same information as above is also acceptable. This release (or an email release) will be kept in the case file either as a paper copy or an electronic copy.

CASA Transportation Release- Parent/ Foster Parent

I _____ agree to allow _____ to
(Parent/ Foster Parent) (CASA Volunteer or Staff)

transport _____.
(Name of Children)

Signed _____

Date _____

*If CASA Volunteer or Staff is unable to obtain the signed form; an email from the parent or foster parent containing the same information as above is also acceptable. This release (or an email release) will be kept in the case file either as a paper copy or an electronic copy.

CASA Volunteer or Staff Child Transportation Checklist

The following items will need to be documented prior to any transporting of children currently served by the CASA program:

- Request to CASA Program office (Executive Director).
- Have read, understand and signed the CASA Transportation Policy

After pre-approval of the request by the CASA Program, the following items are required:

- Current proof of auto insurance/copy of insurance card
- Updated DMV record check is recommended
- Permission from Case Manager or Legal Guardian
- Permission/acknowledgement by current placement provider (Parent/Foster Parent)
- Completion of an in-service training on transporting children is suggested.
- Copy of driver's license
- Car Seats, if applicable

Email and Social Media Policy – CASA for Lancaster County Approved by Board of Directors – May 11, 2023

CASA for Lancaster County believes that social media, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support, and sense of community for those of us engaged in advocacy for abused and neglected children. We also believe it is important that those who choose to engage in social media understand what is recommended, expected, and required when they discuss CASA related topics. Our ability to serve children depends entirely on the trust and support of our community, and it is critical that we handle the confidential information entrusted to us responsibly.

When you engage in social media and online communication, you become a public figure. As a public figure that is associated with CASA, you have a responsibility to help protect this organization and our clients. The following expectations, along with both positive and negative social media examples, are intended to give you guidance in both promoting and protecting CASA, and to protect the children we serve.

Online Communication and Social Media Expectations:

1. **Never reveal confidential information.** Sharing stories that illustrate the value of CASA advocacy for children is often the most powerful way to engage the public in our cause and promote empathy for the children we serve. However, our standards and policies prohibit the sharing of confidential information.

It is unacceptable to discuss online any identifiable details of current cases. This includes names, ages, case specific details, time-specific statements and the sharing of photographs. It is acceptable to discuss general details and to use non-identifying pseudonyms and non-time-specific statements so long as the information provided does not contain information recognizable to the family or others associated with the family or case. For example, use general terms such as “youth” instead of “13-year-old girl.” You should be careful to protect the dignity of families, children and human services agencies, even if they are not named.

2. **Use common sense.** Don't put anything online that you would not want to see with your name attached to it. Be careful not to burn bridges. Please remember, it is possible that you will work with the judge, caseworker, attorney, etc. again in the future or even bump into them on the street. Even if you don't see them again, CASA definitely will and it is important not to damage or destroy CASA's relationships.

Keep in mind that anything you say online is not private. Evaluate what you say about working with CASA in advance to make sure that your online statements will not affect your position in the courtroom when you are advocating for a CASA child.

3. **Don't be a hero.** If you see something negative posted about CASA online, do not jump to our defense immediately because you might escalate someone who just wants to pick a fight online. Please inform us if you see a negative representation of CASA for Lancaster County online and we will determine the best way to respond or not.

4. **Be transparent.** Identify yourself and your role at CASA for Lancaster County (staff/volunteer/board member) when you discuss CASA-related matters. Write in the

first person. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out.

Be clear that you are speaking for yourself, that the opinions expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of CASA for Lancaster County.

5. **Be considerate.** Remember that anyone, including fellow volunteers and CASA staff, may be actively reading what you publish online. Refrain from any communication intended to bash or embarrass CASA for Lancaster County, families, board members, donors, or your colleagues. If you have suggestions for improvements, please go through the proper channels to air your concerns and share your suggestions. Always show proper consideration for other's privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory, such as politics and religion.

Always consider how other parties in a case might feel about your statements.

While we recognize the tremendous work that CASA volunteers do every day, be careful about implying that another party on a case did not do their job adequately, or accidentally insulting anyone involved with the case, as you could hurt feelings and damage both your and CASA's relationship with those involved in this system.

6. **Be accurate.** Even though your posts may be primarily made up of personal opinion, do your research well and check that your facts are accurate. Make sure you have permission to post any copyrighted information (e.g., research, statistics), and be careful about posting or linking to items that may contain viruses. Be the first to admit and correct your own mistakes.

7. **Try to add value.** Does your posting provide worthwhile information and perspective? Does it help people better understand and feel more connected to our cause? Does it build a positive sense of community?

8. **Always comply with the law regarding copyright/plagiarism.** Never post someone else's work without their express permission (other than short quotes that comply with the "fair use" exceptions).

9. **Be aware of laws related to libel and defamation of character.** Defamation of character can lead to lawsuits against the author of the statement and will reflect negatively on the CASA cause. In choosing your words or content, imagine your supervisor, your family and all parties on your CASA case are reading everything you post.

10. **Be cautious when sending emails.** The following guidance has been provided to assist CASA Volunteers in their efforts to maintain dialogue with parties to a case:

- ❖ All emails of sensitive CASA related material must include disclaimer on the transmittal. Disclaimer will state, "This information contains confidential information intended for the sole use of the recipient(s) named above. No information contained in this electronic transmission is to be shared with any

individual(s) who are not named above. If you are not the intended recipient, you are notified that any disclosure, copying, distribution or taking of any action in reliance on the contents of this electronic transmission are strictly prohibited. If the person receiving this e-mail is not the named recipient, please notify the sender."

The following activities are prohibited because they impede the efficient operations of electronic mail systems and online communication:

- ❖ Sending email that is intimidating or harassing.
- ❖ Violating copyright laws by inappropriately distributing protected works.
- ❖ Sending or forwarding chain letters, marketing information, etc.
- ❖ Sending unsolicited messages to large groups except as required to conduct agency business.
- ❖ Sending excessively large messages
- ❖ Sending or forwarding email that is likely to contain computer viruses.

Appendix:

Positive Social Media Examples: These sample posts tell the CASA story well without revealing confidential information about cases:

#1: Had a blast with my CASA kid at Park. ESPECIALLY, the go-carts, which we did over and over. What a hoot!

#2: Great day at court as a CASA volunteer! Can't believe what a difference one adult can make to a child. Learn more [Nebraska Casa Association | Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children](https://www.casa4lancaster.org/) <https://www.casa4lancaster.org/>

#3: Happy to have played a part in an awesome adoption for my CASA kid & help them have a good future! Become a CASA Volunteer.

#4: CASA Superhero Run Sept ??! Come support us CASA volunteers so we can help more abused children!

Negative Social Media Examples: These sample posts either reveal too much information about a case or take a stance that could be damaging to future CASA relationships.

#1: Great day in court as a CASA volunteer! I was the only one up there who knew the child well and was able to help get the judge make a good recommendation.

#2: Finally the judge ruled correctly on my CASA case! So happy to see my CASA kid gets to a happy home.

#3: Had a blast yesterday with my 10-year-old CASA kid at Park. He loved the go-carts, which we did over and over. What a hoot!

#4: Just attended the graduation of my CASA kid from Kearney High School. I'm so proud!