

State Standards

Introduction

The Louisiana CASA Association is dedicated to ensuring that all local CASA programs within our state provide consistent, high-quality advocacy for children in foster care. To achieve this goal, we have established state standards that directly mirror the National CASA/GAL Association standards. These standards serve as a framework to guide local programs in delivering effective advocacy, maintaining operational excellence, and ensuring the well-being of the children we serve.

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Louisiana CASA State Standards is to:

1. **Ensure Consistency:** Align local program practices with nationally recognized standards to promote uniformity and excellence in advocacy efforts across the state.
2. **Enhance Quality:** Provide clear guidelines and benchmarks for local programs to achieve the highest levels of service delivery and operational effectiveness.
3. **Promote Accountability:** Establish a robust system for monitoring and evaluating program performance to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

B. Key Areas of Focus

The Louisiana CASA State Standards cover critical areas essential for the effective operation of CASA programs, including:

1. **Governance and Administration:**
Guidelines for organizational structure, board governance, leadership, and administrative processes to ensure efficient and transparent operations.
2. **Program Management:**
Standards for case management, volunteer supervision, and program evaluation to ensure the provision of high-quality advocacy services.
3. **Volunteer Recruitment and Training:**
Requirements for the recruitment, screening, training, and ongoing development of volunteers to prepare them for their roles as effective advocates.
4. **Advocacy and Case Practice:**
Best practices for advocating on behalf of children, including standards for investigation, reporting, and collaboration with other stakeholders in the child welfare system.
5. **Ethical Conduct and Accountability:**
Expectations for ethical behavior, confidentiality, and accountability to uphold the integrity of the CASA mission and protect the rights of the children we serve.
6. **Community Engagement and Awareness:**
Strategies for engaging with the community, raising awareness about the CASA mission, and building partnerships to support our work.

C. Implementation and Compliance

Local CASA programs are expected to implement these state standards as part of their operations. The Louisiana CASA Association will support programs through training, technical assistance, and resources to facilitate compliance and enhance program quality. Regular assessments, including annual program reviews and site

visits, will be conducted to monitor adherence to the standards and provide feedback for continuous improvement.

D. Commitment to Excellence

By adhering to the Louisiana CASA State Standards, local programs demonstrate their commitment to providing exceptional advocacy for children in foster care. These standards reflect our collective dedication to the CASA mission and our resolve to ensure that every child in the foster care system has a voice and the opportunity to thrive in a safe, permanent home.

The Louisiana CASA Association is proud to lead this effort in setting high standards for our programs and fostering a culture of excellence in child advocacy across our state.

Standard 1: Core Model and Mission

Adheres to the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model of providing screened, trained and qualified community court-appointed 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 Louisiana Children’s Code, living at home or in out-of-home care, as well as operates in alignment with the mission. CASA volunteers advocate for children from birth through the age defined by the state statute as the limit to youth remaining in care.

Elements of Practice

- A. Adheres to and operates in a manner consistent with the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model, with the following required elements:
 - 1. Utilizes community volunteers that:
 - a. Are screened, trained and qualified.
 - b. Are appointed by the court.
 - c. Advocate for the best interests of children and youth.
 - 2. Serves children and youth:
 - a. Before the court as a result of abuse or neglect as defined by the state child welfare laws.
 - b. Living at home or in out-of-home care.
 - c. Birth through the age defined by the state statute as the limit to youth remaining in care.
 - 3. State statute takes precedence if it provides for the CASA volunteer to take other types of cases.
- B. Establishes a program mission statement that is:
 - 1. Written.
 - 2. Consistent with the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model.
 - 3. Adopted by the program’s governing board.
- C. Establishes program values that are:
 - 1. Written.
 - 2. Consistent with the values of National CASA/GAL.
 - 3. Adopted by the program’s governing board.

Standard 2: Guiding Principles

Provides best-interest advocacy for children as reflected in these guiding principles which recognize the importance of family preservation and reunification, equity, diversity, inclusion and collaboration.

Elements of Practice

- A. Integrates the following guiding principles into all aspects of program practices, policies and procedures:
1. Recognize the importance of family preservation and/or reunification:
 - a. It is in a child's best interests to remain with their family of origin when safely possible.
 - b. The program acknowledges that children experience trauma when separated from their family of origin.
 - c. If a child is removed from their family of origin, it is in the child's best interests to be reunified with their family of origin as soon as safely possible.
 - d. If a child is removed from their family of origin, the child should be placed with a relative whenever safely possible and in the child's best interests.
 - e. Strengthening families, through recommendations for services, supports, visitation and communications, is in the child's best interests to achieve stability and/or reunification.
 - f. The program requires and demonstrates respect for the parents and all parties associated with the case.
 - g. The program ensures that information regarding the family's strengths is incorporated into reports to the court.
 - h. The program ensures that information regarding the child's wishes is incorporated into reports to the court.
 - i. When a court determines a child cannot be safely reunified with their family of origin consistent with legal mandates, another permanent placement is in a child's best interests.
 2. Recognize the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion:
 - a. All children regardless of age, race, ethnicity, national origin (ancestry), color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or physical challenge should be safe, have a permanent home and an opportunity to thrive.
 - b. The program acknowledges the existence of implicit bias and takes steps to minimize and/or eliminate implicit bias.
 - c. The program demonstrates an understanding of disproportionality impacting children who have experienced abuse or neglect.
 3. Recognize the importance of collaboration:
 - a. The CASA/GAL program's governing board and the executive director, along with program staff and volunteers, cooperate and coordinate with other volunteer and public service agencies, the courts, community groups, families and individuals to:
 - i. Improve services for individual children and their families.
 - ii. Advocate for needed change in the conditions which adversely affect the children served.
- B. Provides orientation, training and continuing education for staff, volunteers and nonprofit governing board members about these guiding principles.

Standard 3: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Commits to diversity, equity and inclusion and demonstrates these qualities in its own operations, governance, management and quality advocacy for children.

Elements of Practice

- D. Works to diversify its staff, volunteers and governing board to reflect the population and meet the needs of the children served.
 - 1. Written plan and action steps are adopted to diversify the program’s staff, volunteers and governing board to reflect the population of children served.
 - 2. Written plan and action steps are adopted to promote equity and inclusion of diverse staff, volunteers and members of the governing board.
 - 3. Written plan is measurable and reviewed by the governing board to assess progress, at least annually, as part of the program evaluation process and the goals and measures are updated every three years.
 - 4. The governing board identifies strategies and outcomes for diversity, equity and inclusion for program planning.
 - 5. The program engages in collaborative efforts with Louisiana CASA Association to foster diversity, equity and inclusion.
 - 6. The program staff, volunteers and governing board participate in, at least annually, education and training approved and documented by the program related to diversity, equity and inclusion.
 - 7. The program engages individuals who can:
 - a. Help the program identify and understand the needs of the children served.
 - b. Identify the action steps the program can take to address these needs in governance, recruitment, training, supervision, retention, evaluation and advocacy.
- E. Promotes equity and inclusion through its governance, management, operations, recruitment, continuing education, retention and advocacy policies and practices.
- F. Commits to understanding disproportionality and disparate outcomes.
 - 1. Collects and reviews data which may include: race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic, gender, sexual orientation and disability for the children served to inform the program about disproportionality and disparate outcomes.
 - 2. Engages in activities to increase the awareness and understanding of volunteers, staff and governing board members regarding issues of disproportionality and disparate outcomes within its local child welfare and court systems.
 - 3. Participates and works in partnership with child welfare providers and court representatives in identifying, understanding and addressing their community’s issues of disproportionality and disparate outcomes.
- G. Promotes a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace.
 - 1. The program is inclusive and actively recruits qualified staff reflective of the children served.
 - 2. The program administers its human resources practices to all persons without discrimination based upon age, race, ethnicity, national origin (ancestry), color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or physical challenge.

3. The program's staff recruitment and selection practices are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
4. The program is in compliance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Act.
5. The program has written equal opportunity, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies which clearly state its practices in recruiting, selecting and promoting staff.
6. The program publicizes its equal opportunity policy in their staff recruitment materials.
7. The program makes reasonable efforts to ensure the workplace is free of barriers for staff, volunteers and others.

Standard 4: Ethical Conduct and Confidentiality

Upholds the credibility, integrity, dignity and reliability of CASA advocacy by conducting all interactions in an honest, fair, respectful and compassionate manner. The program incorporates policies and practices to avoid conflicts of interest and preserve confidentiality.

Elements of Practice

- A. Requires ethical conduct.
 1. The program establishes policies to govern ethical conduct of its staff, paid consultants, volunteers and governing board.
 2. The program maintains a written conflict of interest policy approved by the governing board. The conflict-of-interest policy:
 - a. Is signed annually by staff, paid consultants, and members of the governing board and the program retains this document in the appropriate record or file.
 - b. Identifies and defines conduct and transactions in which a conflict of interest exists or has the potential to exist and warrants disclosure.
 - c. Prohibits staff, paid consultants, volunteers and members of the governing board from having direct or indirect financial interest in the assets, leases, business transactions or professional services of the program.
 - d. Prohibits staff and/or assigned CASA volunteers from being related to any parties involved in the case or being employed in a position and/or affiliated with an agency that might result in a conflict of interest.
 - e. Identifies other specific conduct or circumstances that constitute a conflict or potential conflict and would therefore be prohibited.
 - f. Requires that the individual involved makes timely disclosure to the program of any conflict or potential for conflict of interest.
 - g. Includes a procedure for recusal from the transaction, case or decision by the individual with the conflict or potential conflict. h Includes a procedure for dismissal or other appropriate discipline of the individual involved with a conflict in the event said individual fails to disclose the conflict prior to becoming involved in the transaction, case or decision affected by the conflict.

3. Although legal counsel may be provided to the program under voluntary auspices on a pro bono basis and a lawyer who offers legal counsel may sit on the program board, the program clarifies these roles in order to keep the two functions separate.
4. If active volunteers are members of the governing board, there are processes and procedures in place for handling potential conflicts of interest in relation to human resources and other issues with potential for a conflict of interest.
5. The program's staff, volunteers and governing board members must immediately notify the CASA/GAL program of any criminal charges filed against them.
6. The program shall promptly refer to National CASA/GAL and the Louisiana CASA Association any credible evidence that a staff person, volunteer, governing board member, contractor, subcontractor, sub-grantee or other person affiliated with the program has committed a criminal or civil violation of law pertinent to fraud, conflict of interest, bribery, gratuity, or similar misconduct involving program funds.

B. Maintains confidentiality.

1. The program follows written policies and procedures regarding access to, use of, and release of information about the children it serves to ensure that the confidentiality of children and their families is maintained at all times.
2. Staff and volunteers respect the child's right to privacy by maintaining confidentiality.
3. Volunteers take an oath of confidentiality upon completion of the National CASA/GAL Association pre-service training and sign a statement of confidentiality upon acceptance of each case.
4. Staff and members of the governing board sign a statement of confidentiality upon hire or affiliation with the program.
5. The program demonstrates its compliance with applicable statutory requirements pertaining to confidentiality of case-related information by ensuring that its policies, procedures and practices are consistent with all applicable laws and regulations.
6. Access to records is limited to the court, authorized program staff and others outside the program whose request for access to confidential information is permitted by statute or the court.
7. The program has a written policy to protect confidential information of staff, volunteers, governing board and advisory committee members, and donors.
8. All confidential electronic and hard copy correspondence, files and records are securely maintained and are readily accessible.

Standard 5: Governance and Administration

Oversees and ensures compliance with applicable laws, regulations, fiduciary obligations, written agreements, standards and financial sustainability of the program.

Elements of Practice

- A. Ensures the governing board adheres to its role and responsibilities:

1. Ensures program compliance with applicable state and local statutes, court rules, ordinances, executive orders and appropriate regulations.
2. Provides the program with access to legal counsel and/or relevant legal expertise to clarify the meaning of laws and regulations governing its program operations and to provide legal counsel as needed to assist in performing the duties assigned to the volunteers by the courts.
3. Establishes a written strategic plan with annual operational goals and objectives that is reviewed and evaluated annually.
4. Ensures development of and compliance with all policies required by National CASA/GAL.
5. Reviews all required policies at least every three (3) years (or more often if required by law, rule, regulation, ordinance, executive order, court order, or standards) to assess the need for updates. The date of each review shall be noted on the corresponding document.
6. Adheres to a whistleblower policy which provides members of the governing board, staff and volunteers a procedure for reporting unethical, inappropriate or illegal activities by members of the governing board, staff or volunteers and such policy affords the reporter protection in making good faith reports about such activities.
7. Secures sufficient financial resources and manages resources prudently in order to support the program's provision of services.
8. Adopts the program's written budget annually which guides the management of resources based on:
 - a. Funding anticipated during the program year.
 - b. Fixed and incremental costs of operating the program and identification of potentially changing costs.
 - c. Review, approval and documentation of any budget deviations.
9. Ensures the program has applicable insurance coverages, such as liability insurance, workers' compensation insurance and directors' and officers' coverage.
10. Appoints the executive director, or functional equivalent, and delegates authority and responsibility for program operations, financial management and policy implementation to the executive director.
11. Evaluates the performance of the executive director in writing at least annually utilizing written performance criteria.
 - a. a Provides for the participation of the executive director in the evaluation process.
 - b. b The executive director is given the opportunity to sign the evaluation report, to obtain a copy and to include written comments before the report is entered into the human resources record.
12. Establishes a written succession plan for the executive director position. The plan makes provision for the following:
 - a. a Designating an interim executive director, if necessary.
 - b. b Charging a committee or designee with responsibility for conducting a formal search.
 - c. c Identifying and providing resources needed to carry out the search effectively.
 - d. d Notifying the state CASA/GAL organization, National CASA/GAL, significant funders, staff and stakeholders promptly.

13. Maintains records of every governing board meeting and accurately reports all actions taken by the governing board and includes a summary of the governing board's deliberations. The written record also includes reports of board committees. The written record is prepared in a timely manner and copies are made available to members of the governing board. A master copy of the written record, to include all board meeting minutes, dates, topics or agendas, and attendance records, is kept with the CASA program's official documents.
14. Ensures the program has been granted the legal authority to operate through state or local statutes, executive or judicial order or court rules.
15. Ensures the program has a statute or written agreement with the juvenile or family court that defines the case assignment and acceptance process as well as the working relationship between the program and the court.
 - a. The agreement must be reviewed at least once every three (3) years to assess the need for updates.
 - b. The written agreement between the CASA/GAL program and the court must be renewed when there is a change in the judicial leadership or changes in policy, law or local court rules, or program resources that substantially impact the relationship between the program and the court.
 - c. The CASA/GAL program has regular communication with the court in order to evaluate the court's satisfaction with the program and to obtain the court's recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the program.
16. Ensures the development of, compliance with and review of by-laws for programs structured as nonprofits. At a minimum, the by-laws:
 - a. Meet statutory requirement.
 - b. Describe the organizational structure and responsibilities of the governing board.
 - c. Establish the mechanisms for selection, rotation and duration of membership, and election of officers.
 - d. Describe terms of board membership.
 - e. Set the minimum number of formal meetings of the full governing board at least four (4) times per calendar year.
 - e. Set the quorum for these meetings of at least a simple majority of the current membership of the governing board.
 - f. Describe standing committees to include executive and finance committees.

B. Ensures and monitors screening of all staff, volunteers and members of the governing board as follows:

1. Obtains a completed written application from each prospective staff person, volunteer or governing board member containing information about educational background, training, employment history and experience working with children.
2. Obtains the names of three (3) or more references that are unrelated to the applicant.
3. Obtains written authorization and information for the program and other appropriate agencies to secure and secures a background check on each prospective staff person, volunteer and governing board member initially and at least every four (4) years if there are no Rap Back services to include:
 - a. Criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant currently resides and works.
 - b. State criminal records.
 - c. FBI or other national criminal database.
 - d. National sex offender registry.

- e. Child abuse registry or child protective services check where permissible by law.
 - f. Social security number check or the equivalent that allows for additional names, aliases and/or addresses to be obtained for the individual for further checks.
4. Conducts a personal interview in-person with each prospective staff person, volunteer and governing board member.
 5. Secures county and state criminal record checks for any county or state not covered by a national criminal background check in which the prospective staff person, volunteer or governing board member has resided for the previous seven (7) years.
 6. Secures a child abuse registry or child protective services check, unless prohibited by law, for any state in which the prospective staff person, volunteer or governing board member has resided for the previous seven (7) years.
 7. Declines any prospective staff person, volunteer or governing board member who refuses or fails to sign a release of information form or submit the required information necessary for any of the checks required by these Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs.
 8. Declines or dismisses any prospective or current staff person, volunteer or governing board applicant found to have been convicted of, or having charges pending for a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse or neglect or related acts that would pose risks to children or the program's credibility.
 9. Considers if an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is unrelated to or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the program, the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony was committed, as well as other factors that may influence the decision, to accept the applicant as a staff person, volunteer or governing board member.
 10. Completes and documents all screening before the staff person, volunteer or governing board member is accepted by the program and written verification is maintained on file at the program office.
 11. Provides written notification as part of the application process for prospective staff, volunteers and governing board members about all screening and background check requirements.
 12. Repeats and documents these record checks for each active staff person, volunteer and governing board member at least every four (4) years. Rap Back services may be utilized for criminal background re-checks.
 13. Determines and monitors adherence to policies related to corrective action(s) for any current staff person, volunteer or governing board member who violates a program policy, court rule or law that poses a risk to a child or negatively impacts the program.

C. Provides program administration oversight as follows:

1. Ensures clear lines of accountability and authority exist at all levels of the program's organizational and management structures and are formalized in a chart of the organization, showing lines of accountability to which all staff, volunteers, and governing board members have received orientation.

2. If the CASA program is under the umbrella of a parent organization, a written agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) is developed that:
 - a. Details the rights and responsibilities of the program and the parent organization.
 - b. Includes procedures for resolving situations in which a conflict of interest exists between the CASA/GAL program and its parent organization.
 - c. Contains the protocol for resource development activities of both organizations.
 - d. Sets a time frame of no more than two (2) years for review and possible revisions of the agreement.
 - e. Specifies the process for termination of the agreement or memorandum of understanding.
3. Communication and collaboration between staff, volunteers and governing board members is promoted by providing opportunities for interactions amongst volunteers, staff and the governing board.

D. Recruits members of the governing board:

1. The governing board is diverse and has members who bring a range of skills, backgrounds and knowledge which support the CASA/GAL program in fulfilling its mission.
2. The program utilizes a written plan or matrix to guide its recruitment efforts.
3. The CASA/GAL program governing board includes individuals with various capabilities:
 - a. Skills and experience to serve at a policy-making level.
 - b. Ability to advocate for sufficient financial resources for the program to carry out its purpose.
 - c. Knowledge of the court system and the community served.
 - d. Ability to reflect community and client interests and to advocate for culturally responsive service delivery.
 - e. Other specialized skills needed to carry out the objectives of the program.
4. The program develops and utilizes on an ongoing basis the following:
 - a. Job description for board members.
 - b. Board recruitment strategies.
 - c. Election and screening procedures.

E. Provides formal orientation for governing board members:

1. Ensures new members of the governing board receive formal orientation to:
 - a. Applicable laws and regulations.
 - b. National CASA/GAL Association Core Model.
 - c. National CASA/GAL Association Standards for Local CASA Programs.
 - d. Roles of national, state and local CASA programs.
 - e. The program's goals, objectives, structure and operations.
 - f. Applicable fiduciary responsibilities, including financial oversight.
2. Ensures the governing board members are familiarized with program services and are provided with key documents related to program governance and/or nonprofit board responsibilities.
3. Completes screening and background checks for governing board members consistent with Standard 5.B above prior to affiliation.

F. Establishes a written plan for ongoing training and development to improve the knowledge and skills of the governing board that is reviewed and evaluated annually.

G. Maintains governing board records:

1. Applications and screening documentation consistent with standard 5.B for each governing board member.
2. Signed and dated statement of confidentiality for each governing board member.
3. Signed and dated conflict of interest policy for each governing board member.
4. Board minutes signed by the board secretary or designee, including attendance, dates of meetings, agendas, topics covered and decisions or resolutions.
5. Standing committee meeting minutes, including attendance, dates of meetings, agendas, topics covered and decisions or resolutions, if applicable.

Standard 6: Management and Funding

Demonstrates mission-oriented leadership in operations management and is a responsible steward of all resources in order to maximize advocacy for children who are eligible for and in need of a CASA volunteer.

Elements of Practice

A. Demonstrates program leadership.

1. The executive director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the CASA program.
2. The executive director has the following qualifications:
 - a. Education and/or training in a related field.
 - b. Management skills and experience to effectively administer the program's human and financial resources.
 - c. Ability to effectively coordinate services with the court and other community agencies.
3. The executive director:
 - a. Plans and coordinates with the governing board the development and periodic review of program policies for approval.
 - b. Establishes a logic model that is adopted by the governing board and evaluated annually.
 - c. Attends, or is represented by a designee, at all meetings of the governing board and its committees to the extent authorized by the governing board.
4. The executive director is delegated human resources management authority by the governing board and the executive director ensures that the program's staff management is carried out in accord with written policy.

B. Manages financial resources.

1. The program follows a written plan for securing and maintaining diversified financial resources adequate to accomplish its established goals and objectives.
2. The program maintains its tax-exempt status, if applicable.
3. The program seeks to conserve its financial resources by:
 - a. Accessing benefits allowed for tax exempt organizations, when applicable.

- b. Maintaining sound policies regarding purchasing and inventory control.
- c. Using competitive bidding, where applicable, in accordance with governing board policy and law or regulation.

- 4. The program regularly analyzes:
 - a. Cost of operations.
 - b. Current and potential funding sources.
 - c. Allocation of funds.
 - d. Effectiveness in achieving budget objectives.

C. Reports and accounts for fiscal operations.

- 1. The executive director is accountable to the governing board for prudent financial management.
- 2. The executive director ensures the submission of financial reports to the governing board at least quarterly.
- 3. The program ensures that an annual report is developed which includes financial, statistical and service data summary information.
- 4. The program annually files the required Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 990 in a timely manner which is provided to the governing board or designee prior to filing.
- 5. The program makes timely payments to the IRS and to other taxing authorities, as required by law.
- 6. Independent audits, financial reviews or compilations are required annually as follows in the table below. Audits are recommended at least every three (3) years regardless of annual revenue.
 - a. A financial audit, review or compilation is completed within nine (9) months following the close of the fiscal year.
 - b. A designated committee of the governing board, such as a finance or audit review committee, or a designated member of the governing board reviews the audit findings and meets with the independent auditor as necessary.
 - c. The auditor's report is reviewed and formally approved or accepted by the governing board and is made available for public inspection.
 - d. When a management letter has accompanied the audit, the governing board promptly reviews and ensures that the recommendations are implemented.
 - e. The program sends to National CASA/GAL and Louisiana CASA Association any audit findings or questioned costs from any private or government audit/monitoring report within 60 days of receipt of findings.
 - f. Programs receiving grant funding through National CASA/GAL may be subject to additional financial oversight.

D. Adheres to accounting and financial reporting policies

- 1. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) apply to independent audits and reviews. Therefore, management's financial statements must be prepared in accordance with GAAP.
- 2. The program has written operational policies and procedures with regard to accounting controls to which the program adheres. In the case of programs under an umbrella organization, the program adheres to the extent that is within the program's control. These policies and procedures include:
 - a. Descriptive chart of accounts.
 - b. Prompt and accurate recording of revenues and expenses.
 - c. Maintenance of a filing system which contains account records and receipts.

- d. Safeguarding and verification of assets.
- e. Control over expenditures.
- f. Separation of duties to the extent possible.
- g. Internal financial control policies:
 - i. Accounting controls including limited system access, segregation of duties and dual controls.
 - ii. Authority parameters and approval procedures.
 - iii. Documentation standards.
 - iv. Protection of assets.
 - v. Limited access to key assets.
 - vi. Reports, reconciliations and reviews.

- 3. The program uses a financial management system that ensures the segregation of restricted funds.
- 4. When the program has the authority, its policies and procedures require:
 - a. Staff with financial responsibilities receive orientation to the bookkeeping system and retraining when system changes occur.
 - b. Systems are in place to prevent or to detect fraud or abuses of the system, such as control, use, and review of the system by more than one person.
- 5. The program's accounting records are kept up to date and balanced on a monthly basis.
- 6. The program reconciles bank statements to the general ledger on a monthly basis.

E. Develops resources to sustain the program.

- 1. The program's governing board sets policies and provides oversight for resource development activities carried out by its staff and volunteers.
- 2. The program registers with the applicable state agency to conduct charitable solicitations.
- 3. The program provides potential funders with an accurate description of the program, its purpose and services as well as the financial needs for which the solicitation is being made.
- 4. The program spends funds for the purposes for which they were solicited and/or designated, except for reasonable costs for administration of resource development activities.
- 5. The program establishes controls on processing and acknowledging contributions in accordance with applicable laws.

F. Manages the workplace.

- 1. The program operates from commercial or community (donated, leased or owned) offices which provide a safe, well-maintained physical environment for its staff, volunteers and visitors.
- 2. The program maintains a work environment for its staff and volunteers that is conducive to effective performance.
- 3. The program's facilities comply with applicable health, fire safety and accessibility codes and regulations.
- 4. The program takes reasonable measures to maintain its equipment and ensure it is used as intended.

5. The program plans for the disposition of property in the event of its dissolution.

G. Monitors for and minimizes risk.

1. The program protects its physical, human and financial resources by evaluating, preventing and reducing the risks to which it is exposed.
2. The program has liability protection for the governing board, the organization, program staff and volunteers through the court, state statute or private insurance coverage.
3. The governing board has responsibility for determining the extent and nature of the liability protection needed for the program, staff, volunteers and governing board, when applicable laws are unclear or silent, and has a plan for regularly reviewing potential liability and establishes the necessary protections for preventing or reducing exposure.
4. The program evaluates and reduces potential liability by:
 - a. Assigning the risk management function to a person or committee whose job description includes responsibility for risk management policies and activities.
 - b. Ensuring that appropriate bonding, self-insurance, or external coverage is adequate to meet the potential liability.
 - c. Developing a process to identify risks in terms of their nature, severity and frequency.
 - d. Avoiding risk through loss prevention and risk reduction.
 - e. Evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of the risk management function.
 - f. Carrying workers' compensation insurance and other insurance as deemed necessary based upon evaluation of its risks and protects itself through means such as indemnification, participation in a risk-pooling trust or external insurance coverage.
 - g. Establishing and adhering to procedures to safeguard all staff, volunteer, governing board and program confidential email communications.
5. The program requires all persons with authority to sign checks, handle cash or contributions, or manage funds to be bonded or the program maintains appropriate insurance coverage to cover losses which may be incurred.
6. The program informs its governing board members and executive director of the amount and type of coverage that is provided on their behalf by the program.
7. The program annually reviews its insurance coverage with its insurance carrier to insure adequate coverage.
8. The program displays licenses and notices required by and in accordance with applicable statutes, rules or ordinances.
9. The program requires staff, volunteers and governing board members to immediately notify the program leadership if/when they have been involved in any criminal activity.
10. When the practice of transporting children is not prohibited in the state, and the program allows staff or volunteers to provide transportation for children, the program:
 - a. Has written policies.
 - b. Secures the necessary liability insurance to cover the program and the staff or volunteer.
 - c. Ensures that the staff or volunteer obtains written permission of the supervisor or executive director.
 - d. Obtains written permission of the child's legal guardian or custodial agency.

- e. When allowing use of a personal vehicle for transportation of children, ensures that the staff or volunteer who has agreed to provide the transportation:
 - i. Has passed a motor vehicles division record check annually.
 - ii. Provides annually to the program a copy of a valid unexpired current driver's license, and proof of adequate personal automobile insurance that meets the required state minimum if one exists or the program's insurance carrier minimum if absent a state minimum.
 - iii. Is knowledgeable of the potential personal risk of liability and chooses to accept the responsibility.

Standard 7: Human Resources

Follows written policies for recruiting, screening, training, supervising, evaluating and developing staff from diverse backgrounds in an equitable and inclusive environment that advances the CASA mission.

Elements of Practice

- A. Maintains and adheres to human resources policies.
 - 1. The program has and adheres to written human resources policies and practices that specify the responsibilities of staff. Human resources policies and practices are equitable, clear and consistent.
 - 2. Written human resources policies are made available to all program staff, which include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Human resources practices.
 - b. Working conditions.
 - c. Wage policies and benefits, as applicable.
 - d. Insurance protection.
 - e. Required and supplemental training, and development opportunities.
 - f. Social media policy.
 - g. Policy requiring all staff and contract workers to disclose any paid employment, contract work, volunteer service, or membership on a board of directors that might present a conflict of interest.
 - h. Whistleblower policy.
 - 3. Each staff person receives a copy of the human resources policies and provides a signed acknowledgement of reading and understanding the policies which is kept on file.
 - 4. The program complies with applicable laws and regulations governing fair employment practices.
 - 5. The executive director and/or appropriate designee reviews at least every three (3) years the human resources policies including equal employment opportunity (EEO), anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and practices; updates policies and revises the policies as needed and submits the proposed policies to the governing board for review and approval.
 - 6. Salaries and benefits are established by considering practices of similar nonprofit organizations in the program's area.
 - 7. The program maintains written operational procedures regarding grievances to provide staff the opportunity and means to lodge complaints and appeals, unless prohibited by law.

8. The program acts on any complaints in accordance with its procedures and keeps documentation on file.
9. The complainant is informed of the resolution of any complaint, subject to confidentiality limitations, and a copy of the notification is maintained on file.
10. Written procedures allow for the periodic participation by the executive director or delegate in the governing board's review of human resources policies and for written notification to staff of any changes to the human resources policies.

B. Recruits and selects diverse qualified staff.

1. Recruitment and selection procedures ensure that the needs of the program are adequately met through an ongoing planning process, which details the type and number of staff required to accomplish its goals and objectives.
2. The program conducts an interview with all applicants considered for employment with the program.
3. The program is required to complete full screening of any applicant considered for employment prior to finalizing any offer of employment, consistent with Standard 5.B.
4. The program's selection process for all staff includes discussion about the issues and challenges that impact the children and families the program serves.

C. Retains qualified staff.

1. The program establishes a succession plan for key staff.
2. The program retains staff qualified to carry out its program goals.
3. The program has a written job description for each position or group of similar positions which clearly specifies qualifications and responsibilities.
4. The program efficiently manages its administrative systems, including accounting, bookkeeping, human resources records and statistical reporting, and assigns appropriately skilled staff to carry out those tasks.
5. Administrative and/or supervisory responsibility is assigned to staff qualified by experience and training.
6. Program staff meet all applicable state registration, licensing or certification requirements for their assignment and/or use of professional titles.
7. The program, in its ongoing planning process, details the type and number of staff required to accomplish the program's goals and objectives.

D. Ensures new staff receive orientation.

1. The program provides new staff orientation introducing the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model, Standards for Local CASA Programs, access to the Louisiana CASA Member Portal, Role of the Local Program, the program's policies and services including, but not limited to:
 - a. Information about confidentiality laws and program policies and the staff person's responsibility to abide by these laws.

- b. Information about the program's structure, service mandates, relationship to the court and human resources policies including sexual harassment and non-discrimination policies.
- c. Lines of accountability and authority within the program.
- d. Information about pertinent laws, regulations, and policies.
- e. Demographics of the community and the children served by the program.
- f. Job responsibilities and description.

- 2. Newly hired program directors and volunteer supervisors complete the National CASA/GAL Association pre-service training within six (6) months of hire.

E. Trains and develops staff.

- 1. The program implements a training and development plan for staff that is reviewed annually and ensures that staff complete 12 hours of continuing education annually to improve knowledge and skills to fulfill the requirements of their respective positions and/or advance the CASA mission.
- 2. The training and development plan prepares executive directors and volunteer supervisors to effectively support volunteers who work with children who have experienced abuse or neglect. The training and development plan provides information about child welfare, law and legal process, trauma-informed care, child development, cultural competency, inclusion and diversity issues, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and other relevant subjects.
- 3. A program considering using a peer coordinator model (or other models utilizing volunteers coordinating other volunteers) must:
 - a. Inform National CASA/GAL of intent to explore and/or implement the model and undergo any required training and adhere to applicable standards, policies and procedures.
 - b. Seek legal counsel before adoption so the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and all applicable laws are considered.
 - c. Engage in a review of insurance considerations, including workers' compensation, to explore implications of such a model.
 - d. Participate in learning opportunities about the peer coordinator model.
 - e. Undergo an organizational assessment to determine need and readiness including considerations around budget, training, recruitment, staffing and organizational culture.
 - f. Develop a written plan and timeline for implementation of the model.
- 4. A program that adopts and implements a peer coordinator model (or other models utilizing volunteers coordinating other volunteers):
 - a. Has a written job description for the position of peer coordinator.
 - b. Provides adequate supervision for the peer coordinator and holds them accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.
 - c. Has a written policy that requires a peer coordinator to participate in equivalent staff orientation, training and evaluation as paid staff.
 - d. Maintains that any staff assigned to the supervision of a peer coordinator as a full-time function will not supervise more than 15 peer coordinators.
 - e. Maintains that a peer coordinator will not oversee more than 10 volunteer advocates.
 - f. Establishes a plan for managing cases assigned to the peer coordinator in the event that the peer coordinator leaves or becomes unavailable.

F. Supervises and evaluates staff.

- 1. The program provides adequate supervision for its staff and holds staff accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.

2. Frequency of individual or group supervision is arranged on the basis of staff needs, the complexity and size of the workload and the staff's familiarity with assignments.
3. The program supervisor holds regularly scheduled case conferences with staff who supervise volunteers to review progress on each case.
4. The program develops and implements a system for the periodic evaluation of all staff.
5. At least once a year, the performance of each staff person is evaluated to review performance against established criteria and the evaluation is documented and kept on file. The staff person actively participates in this process.
6. Staff evaluations include:
 - a. Assessment of job performance in relation to the quality and quantity of work defined in the job description and to the performance objectives established in the most recent evaluation.
 - b. Clearly stated objectives for future performance.
 - c. Opportunity for staff self-evaluation.
 - d. Recommendations for further training and skill building, if applicable.
7. Staff are given the opportunity to sign the evaluation report, to obtain a copy and to include written comments before the report is entered into the human resources record.
8. The program's human resources policies and practices specify, in writing, the conditions for disciplinary action and termination of employment, including violations of program policy and/or documented substandard 5 performance. The program's policies and procedures specify the person or persons with authority to implement disciplinary action(s) and/or terminate employment.
9. The CASA program has policies and procedures for termination of employment that are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

G. Maintains human resources records.

1. Maintains a confidential file or record for each staff person that contains:
 - a. Identifying information and emergency contacts.
 - b. Recruiting and screening documents such as applications and resumes and educational verification.
 - c. Pay and compensation information.
 - d. Job description.
 - e. Training and/or professional development records.
 - f. Performance evaluations with signature page.
 - g. Disciplinary notices.
 - h. Termination of employment notices.
 - i. Letters of commendation or recommendation.
 - j. Time and attendance.
2. Retains the following confidential information separately:
 - a. Security/background/reference checks.
 - b. Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9) forms.
 - c. Self-identified disability, veteran or other status records.
 - d. Medical/insurance forms and records.
 - e. Drug test results.
 - f. Child support/garnishments.

- g. Requests for employment/payroll verification.
- h. Workers' compensation claims.
- i. Internal investigation notes and reports.
- j. Litigation-related or legally privileged communications and documents.

Standard 8: Volunteer Administration

Follows written policies for recruiting, screening, training, supporting, supervising, recognizing and retaining volunteers to fulfill the role and duties of court-appointed special advocates/guardians ad litem, in accordance with applicable laws, rules, regulations and standards.

Elements of Practice

A. Recruits volunteer advocates.

1. The program has a written, inclusive plan for recruiting and selecting volunteers who reflect the diversity of children served.
 - a. The recruitment plan includes CASA program guiding principles (Standard 2), measurable goals and strategies to attract a diverse volunteer pool.
 - b. The recruitment plan includes measurable goals and strategies for community collaboration, media outreach, speaking engagements and other appropriate recruitment efforts.
2. The program prepares standardized information that is readily available to recruit volunteers which includes the following:
 - a. Purpose and role of the CASA volunteer.
 - b. Qualifications to become a CASA volunteer.
 - c. Minimum time commitment required.
 - d. Equal opportunity statement.
3. The program informs potential volunteers of, and refers them to other CASA programs, National CASA/GAL or the state CASA/GAL organization if the applicant might be eligible for or prefer to serve in another program.
4. The program responds to all potential volunteer inquiries within five (5) business days of receipt.

B. Screens prospective volunteers.

1. A volunteer CASA is an individual who is at least 21 years of age and has successfully passed the application and screening process, has successfully completed the National CASA/GAL Association pre-service training, serves under the supervision of the program, and is appointed by the court to advocate for children who come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect as defined by the state child welfare laws.
2. All volunteer applicants are required to provide the necessary information for screening, consistent with Standard 5.B.
3. If a volunteer applicant refuses or fails to provide the necessary documentation for screening consistent with Standard 5.B., the applicant is rejected.
4. The program's volunteer selection procedures ensure that those not selected are treated with dignity, respect and, if appropriate, referred to alternative volunteer opportunities.

5. The program completes all screening consistent with Standard 5.B. before the volunteer is assigned to a case and all screening is documented on file at the program office.
6. Upon selection, prior to assignment of a case, the program obtains signed agreement from each volunteer to the following written policies:
 - a. Conflict-of-interest policy.
 - b. Confidentiality policy.
 - c. Social media policy.
 - d. CASA/GAL volunteer policies and procedures.
7. A qualified volunteer who transfers to a new program must complete the full application and screening process consistent with Standard 5.B.
8. The program has a written policy regarding the reactivation of volunteers who have been inactive for more than one (1) year. The written policy shall include guidelines under which a volunteer would not have to be retrained. The volunteer's file must include documentation of reactivation.

C. Trains volunteers.

1. The CASA/GAL program delivers training to volunteers using the current National CASA/GAL Association pre-service training curriculum (or equivalent curriculum and process for qualification of facilitators that is reviewed and pre-approved in writing by National CASA/GAL in accordance with the National CASA/GAL Association Use of Pre-Service Training Materials Policy).
2. The program verifies and documents that all volunteers successfully complete the required pre-service training including:
 - a. Training dates.
 - b. Name(s) of facilitator(s).
 - c. Verification that the facilitator has been trained as specified below.
 - d. Participant attendance and completion records.
3. The National CASA/GAL Association pre-service training is to be delivered in accordance with the one of the National CASA/GAL Association modalities and for the duration specified by the chosen modality, including in-person contact for program staff to evaluate the applicant's suitability to serve as a volunteer, as specified by the chosen modality.
4. The National CASA/GAL Association pre-service training must be delivered by a qualified facilitator. A qualified facilitator has previously completed the National CASA/GAL Association pre-service training in accordance with Standard 8.C.1 above, and a Completed the National CASA/GAL Association Training of Facilitators, or
 - a. Completed a training of facilitators provided by Louisiana CASA Association's facilitator who has completed the National CASA/GAL Association Training of Facilitators, or
 - b. Co-facilitates his/her first pre-service training with a qualified facilitator who has completed the training of facilitators offered by the National CASA/GAL Association or Louisiana CASA Association (this only applies until the trainer can complete the TOF with a National CASA or Louisiana CASA)
5. The program ensures that the training facilitator(s) offers the current, approved curriculum and prohibits the use of curriculum or materials that have been retired.
6. The program documents that the facilitator completes 12 hours of continuing education annually to include topics related to facilitation, child welfare and CASA mission.

7. Guest speakers shall not deliver the curriculum unless trained to facilitate the CASA training or a CASA Training Facilitator co-facilitates the content.
8. In addition to the 30 hours of pre-service training, if allowed by the court, the program requires each volunteer to visit the court served while the court is in session to observe abuse/neglect proceedings before appearing in court for an assigned case.
9. The program ensures that volunteers complete 12 hours of continuing education annually (pro-rated based on the volunteer's date of swearing in) consistent with National CASA/GAL guidelines and the program documents completion of this requirement for each volunteer. Continuing education hours should be related to the work of best-interest advocacy, and can be completed through a variety of sources and delivery methods such as educational events hosted by the local program or Louisiana CASA Association (such as an annual conference), program-approved externally provided opportunities (in person or online), National CASA/GAL webinars, program-approved books and videos. To encourage a diverse learning experience, no more than four (4) hours of continuing education should be completed by reading books/articles.
10. A qualified volunteer who transfers to a new program must complete, at a minimum, training regarding the local court, laws, program policies and procedures, investigation and report writing.

D. Establishes and adheres to policies for acceptance, assignment and closure of cases.

1. The program has procedures for the acceptance and assignment of cases.
2. The program accepts and assigns cases consistent with the guiding principles (Standard 2), statutory authority, National CASA/GAL Association Core Model and program capacity.
3. A volunteer is sworn in by the judge or court personnel before appointment to a case as permitted by local court practice.
4. Cases are accepted and assigned regardless of age, race, ethnicity, national origin (ancestry), color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or physical challenge.
5. When possible, a volunteer is assigned at the earliest possible stage of the court proceedings.
6. All appointments and assignments are made by an appropriate written order of the court.
7. The program or the court notifies all parties and agencies involved in the case of the volunteer's appointment and release.
8. Volunteers are assigned to children with consideration to:
 - a. Experience, knowledge and skills.
 - b. Nature and difficulty of the current assignments.
 - c. Specific circumstances and availability of the volunteer.

E. Supervises volunteers.

1. The program provides supervision which is appropriate to the volunteers' needs and complexity of case assignments and monitors performance consistent with Standard 8.F.
2. Supervisors provide timely and thorough guidance to volunteers through contact at least once per month by video conference, telephone or in-person meeting.

3. Program staff supervising volunteers full time will not supervise more than 30 active volunteers or a maximum of 45 cases. If the staff person is required to perform duties other than supervision of volunteers, the number of volunteers to be supervised shall be reduced pro rata.
4. The program supervisor holds regularly scheduled case meetings with volunteers to review the issues or progress of the case and needs of the child(ren).
5. The program supervisor conducts a review of the case and the volunteer's performance of the job description of a CASA/GAL volunteer on an ongoing basis and as a component of case closure.
6. The CASA/GAL program has in place a written plan to retain volunteers which includes mechanisms for volunteer recognition.

F. Establishes and adheres to volunteer administration policies and procedures.

1. The program maintains written volunteer policies and procedures.
2. Each volunteer receives a copy of the current volunteer policies and procedures and provides signed acknowledgement of reading and understanding the policies which is retained by the program in the volunteer's record.
3. The job description of the CASA/GAL volunteer is clearly communicated through written policies, role descriptions, pre-service training, continuing education and supervision.
4. The program volunteer policies and procedures specify the role and responsibilities of the CASA/GAL volunteer, are developed with the input and approval of the court (if not already determined by statute) and align with the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model and Standards for Local CASA Programs.
5. The volunteer policies and procedures shall include a description of the volunteer's role and responsibilities including but not limited to the following. The volunteer:
 - a. Reports any incident of child abuse or neglect, or any situation in which the volunteer has reason to believe that a child is in imminent danger to the appropriate authorities and the program supervisor.
 - b. Obtains first-hand a clear understanding of the needs and situation of the child by conducting an ongoing review of all relevant documents and records and interviewing the child, parents, social workers, teachers and other relevant persons to gather information about the child's situation.
 - c. Identifies and advocates for the best interests of the child.
 - d. Collaborates and coordinates with legal, child welfare, and other partners to ensure service provision that is in the child's best interests.
 - e. At every hearing where permitted, provides a report for the court which includes information and recommendations about the child's needs and best interests.
 - f. Appears in court to advocate for the child's best interests and provides testimony when necessary.
 - g. Meets in-person with the child once every 30 days at a minimum.
 - i. In-person contact should take place where the child lives for a majority of visits to ensure in-depth knowledge of the child's environment for informed recommendations to the court.
 - ii. To allow for an exception, the program must have a written exceptions policy outlining circumstances when exceptions may be permitted. Exceptions to permit less frequent in-person contact, or alternatives for in-person contact, shall be documented

and retained in the program's case record as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception.

- h. Makes recommendations for services for the child and the child's family.
 - i. Seeks information about whether a permanency plan has been created for the child and makes recommendations concerning permanency.
 - j. Monitors implementation of service plans and court orders and assesses whether court-ordered services are implemented in a timely manner and whether review hearings should be scheduled with the court.
 - k. Informs the court promptly of important developments in the case through appropriate means as determined by court rules or statute.
 - l. Advocates for the child's best interests in the community by interfacing with mental health, educational and other relevant systems, subject to confidentiality limitations.
 - m. Participates in all scheduled case reviews with program supervisory staff.
 - n. Participates in continuing education relevant to CASA service.
 - o. Maintains complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances.
 - p. Discusses all recommendations concerning the case with the program supervisor prior to submitting recommendations to the court.
 - q. Is prohibited from the following activities:
 - iii. Taking a child to the volunteer's home.
 - iv. Taking a child to any location that is not pre-approved by the child's legal guardian, custodial agency and CASA program supervisor or director.
 - v. Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
 - vi. Making placement arrangements for the child.
 - vii. Giving money or expensive gifts to the child, the child's family or caregiver.
 - viii. Returns the case file and notes to the program when the volunteer's assignment concludes or the case closes.
6. The program supervisor does not alter the volunteer's reports or recommendations without the knowledge and documented agreement of the CASA volunteer.
7. The program has a written policy to resolve conflicts between a volunteer and the program supervisor regarding the handling of a case, reporting of information, or the recommendations to be included in a report to the court.
8. The program will not assign more than two (2) cases at a time to a volunteer.
- a. To allow for an exception, the program must have a written exceptions policy outlining circumstances when exceptions may be permitted. An exception may be granted in the discretion of the CASA/GAL program staff. However, the decision to permit additional assignments shall be documented as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception.
 - b. Under the exception, a volunteer is not assigned more than five (5) cases and the program ensures that the volunteer adheres to the role and responsibilities as described in Standard 8.F.5.
9. When the practice of transporting children is not prohibited in the state, and the program allows staff or volunteers to provide transportation for children, the program:
- a. Has written policies.
 - b. Secures the necessary liability insurance to cover the program and the staff or volunteer.
 - c. Ensures that the staff or volunteer obtains written permission of the supervisor or director.
 - d. Obtains written permission of the child's legal guardian or custodial agency.

- e. When allowing use of a personal vehicle for transportation of children, ensures that the staff or volunteer who has agreed to provide the transportation:
 - i. Has passed a motor vehicles division record check annually.
 - ii. Provides annually to the program a copy of a valid unexpired current driver's license, and proof of adequate personal automobile insurance that meets the required state minimum if one exists or the program's insurance carrier minimum if absent a state minimum.
 - iii. Is knowledgeable of the potential personal risk of liability and chooses to accept the responsibility.

- 10. When a program allows volunteers or staff to take photos of children, the program has written policies that guide the purpose, use, distribution, storage and destruction of the photos after case closure.
 - a. Policies allow photos only when: i Requested or required by the court to be included with or in the court report, or ii Written permission is obtained from the legal guardian.
 - b. Policies prohibit the use of photos for social media, marketing or personal use unless written authorization is provided by the legal guardian.

G. Takes corrective action when necessary.

- 1. The program has policies and procedures that specify the conditions for corrective action and non-voluntary dismissal of volunteers.
- 2. Appropriate grounds for dismissal of a volunteer include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Taking action without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the role or authority of the program.
 - b. Engaging in ex-parte communication with the court.
 - c. Violating a program policy, court rule or law.
 - d. Failing to complete the required National CASA/GAL Association preservice training or 12 hours of continuing education each year.
 - e. Failing to effectively carry out assigned duties, which may include not following program direction or guidance.
 - f. Falsifying a volunteer application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process.
 - g. Having allegations of child abuse or neglect brought against them.
 - h. Experiencing an irresolvable conflict of interest.
- 3. The program's policies and procedures specify the person or persons with authority to dismiss a volunteer.

H. Maintains volunteer records.

- 1. The program maintains a written confidential record for each volunteer that contains, at minimum:
 - a. Application.
 - b. Emergency and identifying contact information.
 - c. Volunteer job description.
 - d. References documentation.
 - e. Documentation of all records checks.
 - f. Pre-service training and continuing education records.
 - g. Performance evaluations and any other applicable documentation related to performance.
 - h. Documentation of volunteer status.

- i. Copy of volunteer’s current driver’s license, motor vehicles records check and verification of automobile insurance (if program allows transportation).
 - j. Documentation of personal interview.
 - k. Name of each child assigned
 - l. Date of each assignment.
 - m. Date of release from each assignment.
2. Written policies outline when, and if, volunteers have access to their records and detail the procedures for review, addition and correction (by volunteers) of information contained in the record.
 3. The program retains the record after a volunteer has left the program in accordance with the program’s records retention policy.

Standard 9: Public Education and Engagement

Communicates and actively engages with stakeholders and the general public to provide information and build support for the CASA mission and the needs of children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

Elements of Practice

A. Educates and engages the public.

1. Consistent with the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model and National CASA/GAL Association Brand Guidelines and Intellectual Property Standards, the program establishes and executes a written plan for public information, outreach and education activities to provide an understanding of the program's purpose, function and role in judicial proceedings and the community social service system.
2. The program disseminates public information to broaden awareness about the needs of the children it serves and the benefits of CASA advocacy for those children.
3. The program works closely with representatives from the legal and social services communities, other child advocacy programs, community service and civic groups, as well as with businesses to advance the CASA mission and to foster interagency collaboration and coordination of services for children.
4. The program works in partnership with the state CASA organization and the National CASA/GAL Association to disseminate timely information concerning newsworthy events, stories and occurrences to advance the CASA/GAL mission and benefit the children served.
5. The program has a written communications policy that:
 - a. Aligns with the National CASA/GAL Association Brand Guidelines and Intellectual Property Standards.
 - b. Outlines appropriate contact with the media and an escalation protocol for state or national media inquiries.
 - c. Identifies who communicates with the public.
 - d. Addresses use of social media.
 - e. Describes when to escalate issues to program, Louisiana CASA Association and National CASA/GAL leadership.

6. The program has a written crisis management plan that addresses issues that may have significant impact on the credibility, reputation or funding at the local, state or national level. This crisis management plan provides for information sharing between the program, governing board, national, state and local CASA organizations within 24 hours, subject to confidentiality limitations

Standards 10: Data and Records

Compiles, maintains, manages and reports quality data and information in accordance with applicable laws, policies and/or standards. The program maintains complete, accurate and current case records and volunteer files.

Elements of Practice

A. Collects data for reporting.

1. The program collects the information needed to complete the National CASA/GAL Association's six-month and annual surveys, and other data collection requests.
2. The program has a tool and/or software for the collection of data with the following safeguards:
 - a. Operational procedures governing use of the tool, system and/or software.
 - b. Confidentiality policies concerning electronic data and information sharing via electronic media.
 - c. Review of all decisions regarding electronic files by program management.

B. Retains child and case information.

1. The program maintains complete, accurate and current records for each child served, which include:
 - a. Name of the child.
 - b. Name of volunteer.
 - c. Date of appointment by the court.
 - d. Date of assignment of the case to the volunteer.
 - e. Date the case is closed by the court.
 - f. Date the volunteer is released from the case.
 - g. Biographical or other identifying information.
 - h. Background on the nature of the presenting problem or reason for referral by the court.
 - i. Court reports and any court orders related to the service being provided.
 - j. Social service case plan, or other document from the child protection agency indicating the plan for the child.
2. Records for all children served are kept up to date through:
 - a. Current contact entries.
 - b. Periodic progress notes or summaries.
3. The program maintains copies of all volunteer reports, written correspondence concerning the case, significant case updates and issues discussed through non-written communications (such as in-person meetings or phone calls) not otherwise included in volunteer reports or written correspondence. The program also requires its volunteers to turn in their case records including all notes when the case is closed.
4. Upon case closure, a record (e.g. court order, case closure summary, recording in database) is made of the date and reason for closure.

5. The program has written operational procedures, consistent with legal requirements, and with the policy on confidential information, governing the retention, maintenance, protection, destruction and return of case files when the case is closed. Procedures should include:
 - a. Records are kept a minimum of seven (7) years from case closure unless there is a court or statutory requirement that dictates otherwise.
 - b. Electronic children’s case files are backed up on a separate system at least once a week and the backup is kept off site.
6. The program has established procedures for the legal and programmatic release, in writing, of volunteers when a case is closed or when a volunteer is removed from a case.

Standard 11: Network and Membership

Maintains membership with National CASA/GAL Association and is a member or an affiliate of the state CASA/GAL organization (if one exists) and meets the standards, requirements and policies of both.

Elements of Practice

- A. Is a member of the National CASA/GAL Association for Children.
 1. Maintains membership and works cooperatively and collaboratively with the National CASA/GAL Association for Children.
 2. The program adheres to all National CASA/GAL Association standards, policies and agreements.
 3. The program follows all National CASA/GAL protocols.
 4. If the program has an auxiliary, the program has a written agreement with the auxiliary, follows any National CASA/GAL Association policies relating to working with an auxiliary, and makes the auxiliary aware of National CASA/GAL Association standards and requirements for CASA/GAL auxiliary program membership.
 5. The program provides a copy of the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model and Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs to its governing board and program staff, and reviews these periodically to strengthen understanding and clarity of the role and requirements of local CASA/GAL programs in advancing our shared mission.
 6. Existing programs contemplating expansion to a new county, regionalization, merger or a change in governance structure must adhere to the applicable procedures of the National CASA/GAL Program Membership Process.
- B. Is a member or affiliated with the Louisiana CASA Association.
 1. Maintains membership or affiliation with Louisiana CASA Association.
 2. The program takes advantage of the services available from the Louisiana CASA Association which may include:
 - a. Technical assistance.
 - b. Resource materials.
 - c. State conference.
 - d. Local program directors’ meetings.
 - e. Training opportunities.

- f. Web resources.
-
- 3. The program complies with state CASA/GAL standards (if they exist). When the program believes a conflict exists between National CASA/GAL Association standards and Louisiana CASA Association standards, state laws, regulations or court rules, the program and state organization, present the perceived conflict to the National CASA/GAL Association. National CASA/GAL will review the conflict and determine which takes precedence.



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