



HANOVER CASA PROGRAM INFORMATION

HANOVER COUNTY
Department of Community Resources
P. O. Box 470
Hanover, VA 23069

I. WHAT IS THE CASA PROGRAM?

In 1976, a judge in Seattle, Washington began exploring ways to ensure that abused and neglected children's best interests were consistently presented to the court. Under the premise that trained community volunteers could offer the most effective form of independent advocacy for these children, he began recruiting volunteers who could make such a commitment. As word of the success of the program spread, similar programs began all over the country.

The Hanover CASA Program is a member of this national innovative child advocacy program. Thoroughly trained and supervised community volunteers, who must be appointed by judges, speak up for abused, neglected, and dependent children who have been brought into the court system. The Hanover CASA Program includes approximately twenty to twenty-five volunteers who advocate for children in the county.

Nationally, the CASA Program is endorsed by the American Bar Association, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the U.S. Department of Justice. In Virginia, CASA is endorsed by the Virginia Bar Association and many local bar associations.

II. WHAT IS THE CASA VOLUNTEER'S ROLE?

A CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) Volunteer, assigned on a one-to-one basis with a child in need, carefully gathers information about the child's circumstances before submitting a report to the court. This report reflects the information gathered by the CASA and includes recommendations to the judge as to what actions would be in the child's best interest.

III. HOW DOES THE CASA CARRY OUT HIS/HER ROLE?

The CASA Volunteer independently gathers information and evaluates the child's circumstances, identifies and advocates the child's interests, mediates among competing or conflicting points of view, and monitors and facilitates service delivery from other appropriate agencies. During this process, the CASA confers on a regular basis with the program supervisor and the child's Guardian ad Litem.

IV. WHAT TRAINING DOES A CASA VOLUNTEER RECEIVE?

CASA Volunteers undergo an intensive, thorough training course and attend ongoing monthly training workshops. Volunteers learn about courtroom procedure from the principles in the system – from judges, lawyers, court personnel, and others. CASA Volunteers also learn effective advocacy techniques for children, and are educated about specific topics ranging from child sexual abuse to early childhood development and adolescent behavior from caseworkers and mental health workers.

V. HOW DOES THE CASA VOLUNTEER RELATE TO THE CHILD FOR WHOM HE OR SHE ADVOCATES?

CASA Volunteers offer the children trust and advocacy during complex legal proceedings. They explain to the child the events that are happening, the reasons they are in court, and the roles the judge, lawyers, and social workers play. While remaining objective observers, CASA Volunteers encourage the child to express his/her own opinion, hopes, and feelings.

VI. WHY CASA?

Nationally, CASA represents a uniquely cost effective, result-oriented program, which utilizes volunteers to intervene on behalf of children who have been brought into the court system for a variety of reasons. Currently, an estimated 59,000 volunteers working from over 900+ CASA programs throughout the United States, District of Columbia and Virgin Islands, speak in court for an estimated 243,000 children.

Locally, the Hanover CASA Program is funded through the county and by state and federal grants. Hanover's CASA Program is operated under the Department of Community Resources. Last year the volunteers contributed 1197 hours of advocacy work. At the national median hourly wage of \$18.76, these volunteers provided the county with \$22,458 in child related services.

For further information about the Hanover CASA Program, please call 804-365-4296.

(updated 8/08)