



Our Mission

The Hanover CASA Program is committed to advocating for the best interests of children involved in the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court process. The CASA program recruits, trains, and supervises competent volunteers dedicated to representing the needs of abused and neglected children, as well as other children in juvenile dependency proceedings. The program promotes safe, permanent homes for all children and seeks to educate the community concerning the needs of abused and neglected children.

Court Appointed Special Advocates a program of Hanover County Department of Community Resources

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Hanover CASA is funded by Hanover County, the Department of Criminal Justice Services, and the Victims of Crime Act through the Virginia Department of Social Services.

This brochure was developed through a grant provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services using funds from the Victims of Crime Act.

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Department of Community Resources
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Hanover Court Appointed Special Advocate Program



Member of
**The National Court Appointed
Special Advocate Association**

Hanover Court Appointed Special Advocate Program

What is CASA?

CASA had its start in 1977 when a judge in Seattle, Washington began exploring ways to ensure that 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, volunteers who could make such a commitment were recruited. As word of the success of the program spread, similar programs began all over the country.

The Hanover CASA Program began in 1988 and maintains the support of local judges, elected officials, attorneys, and other professionals in Hanover County. A CASA Volunteer undergoes various background checks and participates in approximately 40 hours of training before accepting his/her first assignment. Some of the topics covered in training include child development, family dynamics, as well as legal issues. In addition, ongoing training is offered on a regular basis. Once a CASA Volunteer is sworn in by the judge, he/she is asked to make at least a one year commitment to the program.

The appointment of a CASA Volunteer to a case is temporary and does not involve a long-term relationship. While attorneys can request a CASA Volunteer, the judge is the only person who can appoint one to a case. A CASA Volunteer can be appointed at a child's first court hearing or any time after, and will follow the case to its conclusion.

Has a child you know been appointed a CASA?

If the judge has appointed a CASA Volunteer to advocate for a child, you can expect him/her to do the following:

- Thoroughly gather information about the situation that has brought the child and his/her family into Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court. To do this the CASA Volunteer will review records, talk to the child as well as talk to family members, professionals, and others involved in the child's life.
- Submit a written report to the judge regarding the information that is obtained. The CASA Volunteer will include in this report recommendations as to what is believed to be in the child's best interest. These recommendations to the judge may include custody and/or visitation, services to the child and/or to the family.
- Monitor the case until the judge feels it is time to relieve the CASA. The volunteer will maintain regular contact with the child and others involved in the case, until the case is closed, to make sure the child is receiving the attention and services ordered by the court and is living in a safe, permanent home.



How does a CASA Volunteer differ from others involved in the case?

A CASA Volunteer is in the unique position of being an advocate for the child alone and of being an independent observer. As members of the community and often parents themselves, CASA Volunteers have a vested interest in insuring that the child receives the best possible chance for a successful outcome.

Are there other agencies or groups that provide the same service?

No. There are child advocacy organizations, but CASA is the only program where volunteers are appointed by the court to represent a child's best interest. In Virginia, CASA programs are established by State Law, and regulated by the Department of Criminal Justice Services. The Hanover County CASA Program is administered by the Hanover County Department of Community Resources.

If a CASA Volunteer has been appointed to a child you know, the volunteer may be contacting you in the near future to discuss this case.

If you need to contact the CASA Volunteer, or if you have any questions about the Hanover CASA Program, you can call the CASA office at **365-4300**.