CASA of Erie and Niagara Counties, a program of the Mental Health Association of Erie County, is a non-profit, volunteer organization that advocates for the best interests of abused and neglected children within the Family Court System.

CASA VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer.

REPORTS TO:

Volunteer Supervisor or Director

PURPOSE:

The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained volunteer Child Advocate who:

- Speaks up for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the family court system.
- Works to ensure that the child's right to a safe, permanent home is addressed quickly and with due consideration.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Must be a dedicated child advocate, with a willingness to learn and advocate to ensure that the needs of the children in the Erie and Niagara Counties Family Court system are being met.
- Must be at least 21 years of age.
- Must successfully pass a thorough screening/background check.
- Successful completion of pre-service training program consisting of 30 hours, court observation, and 12 hours of additional in-service hours per year.
- Able to respect and relate to individuals from various backgrounds and cultures in a caring, objective and sensitive manner.
- Good oral/written communication skills.
- Understands and is willing to commit to a minimum of a one-year volunteer position serving on a minimum of one assigned case.

- Willing to accept supervision, training and evaluation from the professional staff
- Able to provide own transportation.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Attendance at pre-service and in-service training.
- 12-month commitment with a minimum of 1 case, averaging approximately 10 hours per month.
- Meet in person with the child/youth every 30 days at minimum.
- Gather information from and collaborate with child/youth, family, professionals, and those with relevant information about the child/youth.
- Assess and identify risks to inform needs for services and supports for the child/youth and family.
- Provide up to date, independently obtained fact-based information/recommendations to the court that addresses the needs and best interests of the child/youth and build on strengths of the family, community and culture to help the courts make the most well-informed decisions for the best interests of the child/youth by submitting quality written reports two weeks in advance of the case court date to the Volunteer Supervisor or Director.
- Provide the child's wishes/voice to the court.
- Provide active advocacy and attend court hearings until directed otherwise by the court or released by the program.
- Conduct on-going documentation/child assessments through Optima, the program's data tracking system.

BENEFITS:

- Training, support and supervision from the staff of CASA of Erie and Niagara Counties.
- Opportunity to learn about the family court and social services systems.
- Opportunity to develop advocacy skills and abilities.
- Satisfaction from contributing to community services on behalf of abused and neglected children.