

CASA of Sonoma County  
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Speak up  
for  
a child.



**Making a difference...One child at a time!**

♥ **From the Director's Desk:**

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). It is important that you review the information we have provided in this packet to orient yourself to the steps in becoming a CASA. I also ask that you carefully think through your decision to become involved us. This is a meaningful and very important step you are about to take. Reliability and commitment are of the utmost importance in this extraordinary journey. We offer quarterly training sessions. We start your process with a pre-training orientation interview where I will meet you personally to assist in your decision making process.

Included you will find a job description of the role of a child advocate, and the CASA program responsibilities to the juvenile court and to the children it serves. Please, also examine the qualification requirements for CASA volunteers.

Training includes 30 hours of classroom study as described in the enclosed training schedule. Additional hours are required, including courtroom and case review observations. You will also participate in post-training site visits to other organizations assisting our youth.

Because CASA is involved with children dependents of the Juvenile Court, we must ask that you participate in a complete security clearance. A list of those requirements is also included in this packet (DMV, Child abuse registry and DOJ/FBI).

The CASA program is a proud organization embracing all people of our community. We encourage individuals of diverse backgrounds to apply.

Thank you for your interest in CASA and for your cooperation in our screening process. I especially look forward to meeting you and each of the volunteers that are interested in the CASA Program.

*Millie Gilson*

♥ **Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things:**

When a child is a victim of abuse or neglect and becomes dependent of the juvenile court system, he enters a world of bewildering mazes. The child is at the mercy of the court system which must decide where to place him and what services to provide for his family.

The court will hear from parents, social workers, and lawyers, each with their own bias, but the court often does not hear from the child.

Court Appointed Special Advocates of Sonoma County (CASA) was founded to be the voice for such children. CASA is a non-profit, volunteer program dedicated to improving the lives of abused and neglected children. The trained CASA volunteer is a sworn officer of the court, appointed by the judge to assess the circumstances, report the findings and speak on the child's behalf.

The CASA volunteer becomes a friend to the child, explaining what is happening and why, listening to the child's fears and helping to resolve any feelings. Through frequent visits, the CASA volunteer monitors the case and makes sure everything that can be done is being done. The CASA volunteer serves as an advocate, role model and as the child emancipates and leaves the system, become a lifelong connection.

The CASA volunteer works closely with social workers, therapists, attorneys, and others to make certain the child's needs are met. The CASA's ultimate goal is to ensure that authorities provide a safe, permanent, loving family for the child as quickly as possible.

*"The CASA volunteers humanize the Juvenile Court System for children during what is probably the most traumatic period in their lives."*

**Arnold Rosenfield  
Founding Sonoma County Superior Court Judge**

**Stay connected with us:**

Please visit our website [www.sonomacasa.org](http://www.sonomacasa.org) to learn more about CASA, donate to the cause or become a volunteer.

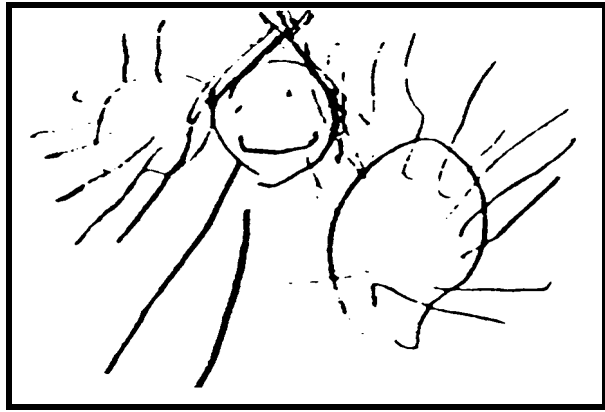


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Please review us on [www.greatnonprofits.org](http://www.greatnonprofits.org)





"This is my CASA. See, this is you. Your hair is poofy and you always smile. These are your hands. They are big so you can protect me, and this is your body."

### ♥ A CASA volunteer must be ready:

- ♥ To demonstrate an interest in children and their welfare.
- ♥ To respect and relate to people from various backgrounds and cultures in a sensitive and caring manner.
- ♥ To be objective, open-minded and flexible.
- ♥ To gather and accurately record fact-based information related to the people and circumstances in a child's life.
- ♥ To communicate effectively, orally and in writing.
- ♥ To be willing to make presentations before the court.
- ♥ To understand and obey the rules of confidentiality.
- ♥ To be able to make a minimum two year commitment.
- ♥ To provide a monthly volunteer log of hours to the agency.
- ♥ To attend mandatory case review sessions and team sessions every 60 days.
- ♥ To accept supervision and seek feedback from CASA's trained professional staff.
- ♥ To pass a security check including DOJ/FBI, Child abuse registry check, DMV records and three letters of recommendation.
- ♥ To provide one's own transportation.
- ♥ To understand you will not be allowed to take youth to your home or engage them with your families/friends to assure confidentiality laws are observed.

### ♥ Security Clearance Requirements:

- ♥ One page letter outlining your motivation and feelings regarding becoming an advocate.
- ♥ DMV printout
- ♥ Three letters of recommendation (employer, personal, family, past volunteer experience).
- ♥ Fingerprint check (Request location information and referral form from CASA).
- ♥ Child abuse registry clearance
- ♥ Completed application, current photo
- ♥ Interview and attendance at orientation
- ♥ Copy of driver's license, proof of insurance
- ♥ Copy of proof of automobile insurance

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 ☆ **Give of Yourself – Give to Yourself** ☆  
 ☆ According to a 30-year study that looked at the ☆  
 ☆ health effects of family, work, and volunteer ac- ☆  
 ☆ tivities, **volunteering was the most important** ☆  
 ☆ **factor in determining who was healthiest and** ☆  
 ☆ **lived longest.** Phyllis Moen, Ph.D., professor of ☆  
 ☆ human development and sociology at Cornell ☆  
 ☆ University, who conducted the study says, ☆  
 ☆ "Volunteering gives us a sense of ourselves." ☆  
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### ♥ RECOMMENDED READING LIST ♥

- Somebody Else's Children*  
by John Hubner and Jill Wolfsan
- A Child Called "It"*  
And the sequel
- The Lost Boy*  
by David Pelzer
- I Speak for This Child*  
by Gay Courter
- On Their Own: What Happens to Kids When They Age Out of the Foster Care System*  
by Gary Stangler

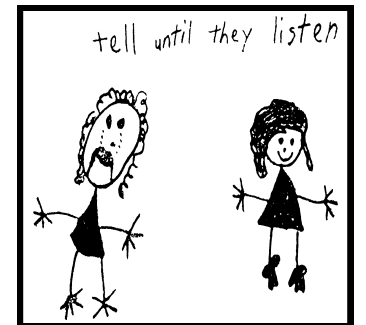
For further recommendations and information:  
 CASA of Sonoma at: [www.sonomacasa.org](http://www.sonomacasa.org)  
 California CASA at: [www.californiacasa.org](http://www.californiacasa.org)  
 National CASA at: [www.casaforchildren.org](http://www.casaforchildren.org)

### ♥ CASA Volunteer Training Program:

Once accepted into the CASA program, the child advocate will participate in a 30-hour comprehensive training program taught by the CASA Advisory Committee. Additional hours of training include courtroom observation, tours of facilities, and other community-based programs, along with 12 hours continuing education per year.

Upon completion of the CASA program training the advocate will have:

- ♥ Gained practical knowledge of their role and responsibilities as a child advocate.
- ♥ Examined several major issues related to their work as a CASA.
- ♥ Had the opportunity to have practiced many of the skills required of CASAs.



### ♥ Mission Statement & Program Description:

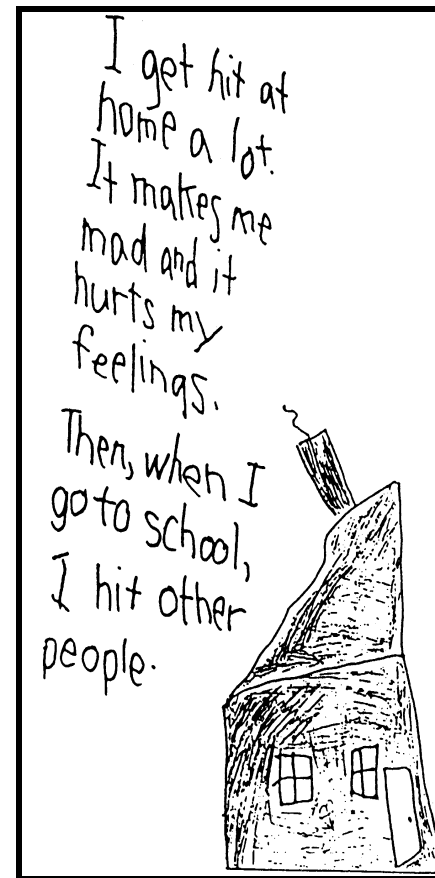
The Sonoma County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Program is committed to serving abused and neglected children coming before the Juvenile Court for protection and rehabilitation services.

The purpose of the CASA program is to humanize the complex child welfare system for the child victim by providing a trained volunteer who will act as a consistent role model, advocate, and potential life connection.

The goal of the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program is to **prevent abused and neglected children from becoming lost in the Juvenile Court system.** The objective of matching a CASA Volunteer, a trained advocate from the community is to ensure that the child's best interest is represented.

#### The volunteer has three essential roles as an advocate:

- ♥ To be the child's voice in court, representing their needs, concerns, and best interests.
- ♥ To compliment the Juvenile Court/Child Welfare system by researching and assessing the circumstances of each case and reporting their recommendations and findings.
- ♥ To continue to support the child and the progress of the case as it moves through the system.



**CASA - ca sà, (noun) a common person with an uncommon commitment; a child's voice in court; a volunteer citizen working to make a difference in ending child abuse.**

CASA volunteers are in a unique position because they provide information not usually available to the Juvenile Court. Because of the growing number of cases filed in Juvenile Court and dwindling resources to adequately monitor the cases, judges find the CASA volunteers to be positive complements to providing the information necessary to make better-informed decisions.

In addition to our services to abused and neglected children, the CASA program works to provide community education and awareness concerning the issues of child abuse, neglect and child welfare policy. We are also committed to working towards public policies that promote child abuse prevention and addressing reforms in the Juvenile Dependency/Foster Care system.