



The Court Appointed Special Advocate Program of Montgomery County  
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## **Program Information for Professionals**

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained volunteer appointed by the Juvenile Court who advises the court about the best interests of a child.

Each CASA typically works with only 1 child or 1 family at a time and contributes approximately 20 hours of service per month. Most CASAs visit with their CASA children at least once a week and have regular phone contact with other professionals involved in the case. CASAs are invited to all court hearings and submit formal reports to the Judge prior to each hearing. A CASA provides the Judge with a carefully researched report to assist the court in making sound decisions about that child's future.

The CASA's report comes from the perspective of an independent observer who has thoroughly assessed the child's situation and made objective recommendations. During the course of the investigation, the CASA talks with the child, parents, family members, social workers, school personnel, health providers and other individuals who are knowledgeable about the child's history. The CASA's recommendations are discussed during the hearing, and the CASA's input is used in the court's decision making process.

Before becoming a CASA, applicants undergo a rigorous screening process and pre-service training. After completing an application process which includes a written application, personal interview, reference checks, and a criminal background check, suitable applicants are invited to the 40 hour pre-service training program developed by the National CASA Association. Training focuses on child abuse, child development, advocacy, juvenile legal process, foster care and placement, and the CASA role. After pre-service training, applicants are interviewed a second time. Qualified, trained applicants are then invited to become Court Appointed Special Advocates, and they are assigned cases which best match their personal abilities.

CASAs attend monthly supervisory meetings with a CASA staff person. These one-on-one case planning sessions are discussions of case objectives, goals, and progress with feedback and guidance provided by the case supervisor. In addition, CASAs attend monthly in-service training programs facilitated by guest speakers with experience in the fields of child abuse and child advocacy.

For more information, please contact the CASA program.